

THE

**NEW
REPUBLIC**

BUSH'S POLITICAL TAX CUT
Ryan Lizza

HOW DEMOCRATS MUST REFORM
The Editors

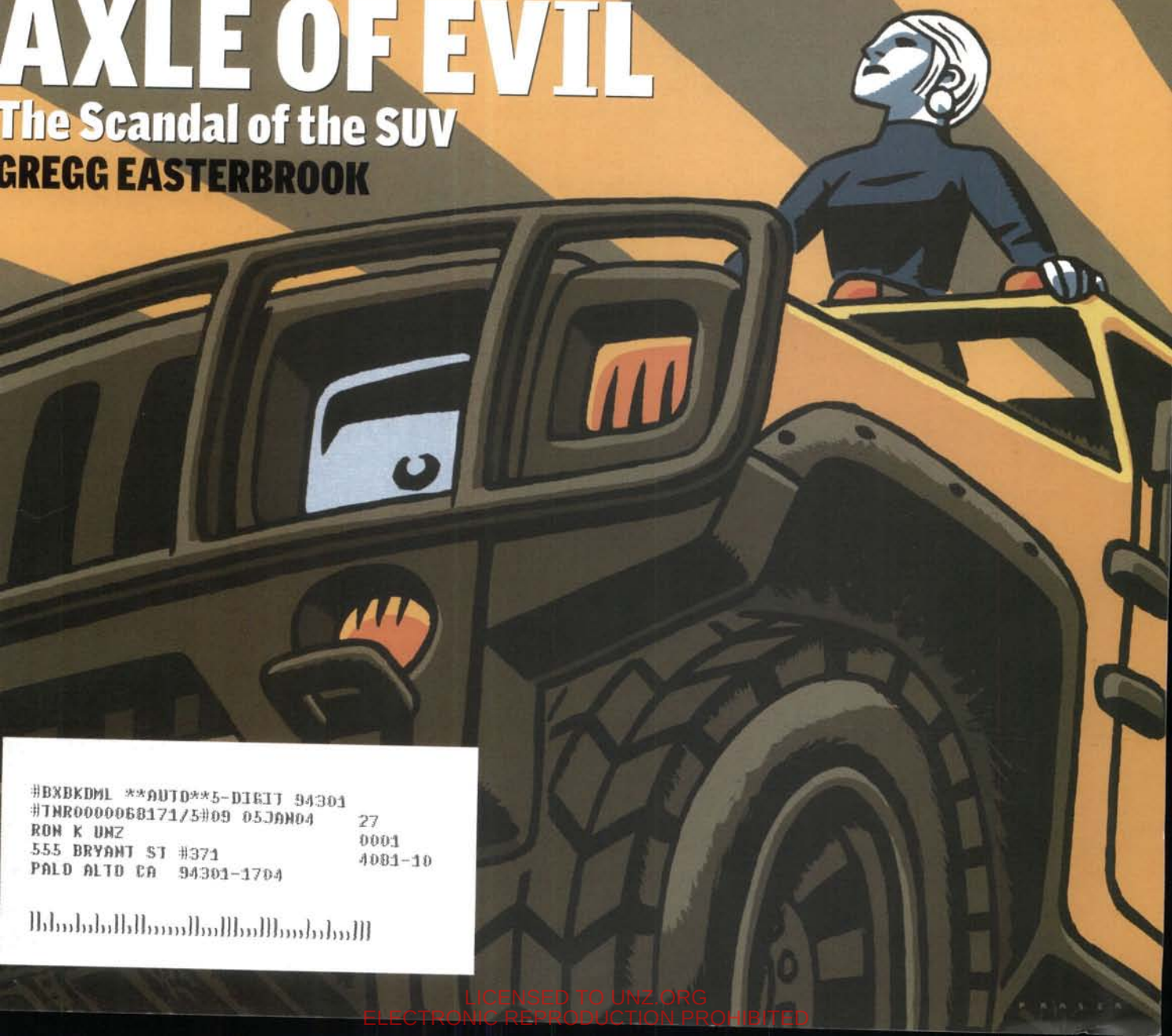
October 2003

HOW DEMOCRATS MUST RESPOND

The Editors

AXLE OF EVIL

GREGG EASTERBROOK



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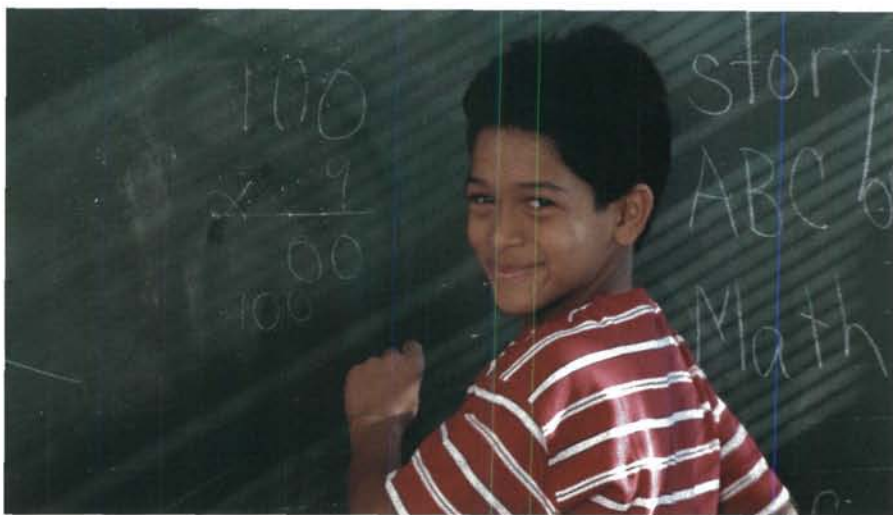
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Where We Stand

THE AFT ON CRITICAL ISSUES IN PUBLIC EDUCATION

THE WRONG BOTTOM LINE

**Short-sighted school funding cuts
will do long-term harm to our kids**



FACTS:

- 37 states cut a combined \$12.8 billion from FY 2002 budgets that had already been enacted.
- More than 100 school districts in 7 states have switched to a 4-day week this school year, primarily to save money.
- Across the country, budget cuts are forcing parents and students to raise money to pay for teachers and teachers aides who would otherwise be let go.
- The federal FY 2003 education budget has yet to be enacted, leaving states uncertain about what to expect and unable to plan for the future.

New York Times education writer Jacques Steinberg recently painted a disturbing picture of impending educational disaster at the Jeremiah E. Burke High School in Boston. Steinberg reported that state and city budget cuts had eliminated 12 Burke teachers, resulting in class sizes of 30 or more and an increase in disciplinary problems. What makes this story especially tragic—and instructive—is that these cutbacks reverse policies that led to the school's remarkable turnaround a few years earlier.

In 1995, Burke was doing so poorly that it lost its state accreditation. Instead of giving up, the school used state and community support to make improvements. It reduced average class size from 34 to 20, raised academic standards, and hired much-needed teachers and aides.

While turning around a struggling school is never easy, the reforms adopted so effectively by the Burke community have proven successful in troubled schools all across the country, from Seattle to Baltimore and Hartford. They are reforms that work. But they also require additional resources, and too many lawmakers and public officials are using revenue shortfalls as an excuse to cut education funding. They're looking at the wrong bottom line and turning tough budget choices into bad education policies.

When it comes to education and other public services, "short-term solutions" are often a contradiction in terms. The cutbacks at Burke High School represent half of the instructors hired to turn the school around; letting them go will have long-term consequences for many students there.

These are not easy times for our schools. Every day brings new threats, from budget cuts to phony cure-alls like vouchers. But improving our public schools can't be done on the cheap. It can't be done through bake sales, vending machines, or auctions. And it can't be done by cutting taxes for the wealthy.

It requires spending wisely on what works. And it requires local, state and, especially, national leaders to make education a priority.

The recently enacted "No Child Left Behind" law makes especially critical the need for adequate, sensible, and targeted federal funding to help improve our public schools. And fulfilling the goals of this law will require Congress and the President to match their rhetoric with the investment they promised. Equally important, it will require a *sustained* commitment, especially to vulnerable urban schools that have recently been making real progress. If these things don't happen, we will quickly see how easily even the most disciplined school can fall into a downward spiral.

Sandra Feldman, President, The American Federation of Teachers

To learn more about the AFT's stand on school funding and other issues, visit our web site at aft.org



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*A Journal of Politics
and the Arts*

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JANUARY 20, 2003

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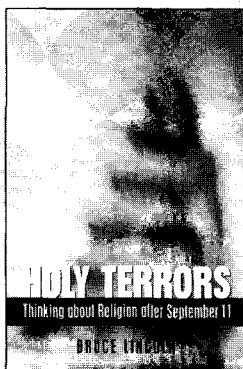
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Fundamentalism & RELIGION

NEW FROM CHICAGO



Holy Terrors

Thinking About Religion after September 11

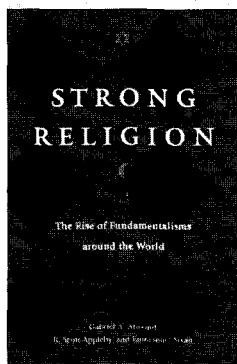
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C O R R E S P O N D E N C E

Rate of return

TO THE EDITORS:

Remarkably, Peter Beinart's TRB makes a dubious argument for term limits while failing to mention the most powerful argument against them ("Outer Limits," November 25). The dubious argument is that they would "[a]bsolutely" increase congressional turnover by overcoming the anti-competitive effects of bipartisan gerrymanders. They might—but the dynamics of political competition are much more complicated, as explained in a new article by University of Pennsylvania Law School Professor Nathaniel Persily in the *Harvard Law Review*. Persily shows, among other things, that the turnover rate in the House is actually high by historical standards; competition in party primaries and in presidential elections exists in "safe" districts; about two-thirds of House members have been in office less than one decade; incumbent reelection rates are almost as high in the non-gerrymandered Senate; partisan control of state legislatures shifted more often in the past decade than it has since the early '70s; in 1994, House control shifted for the first time in 40 years; and most "nonpartisan" districting commissions are in fact controlled by party leaders. Political competition, then, remains more robust than the conventional wisdom suggests. Of the many arguments against term limits, the strongest—unmentioned in the TRB—is also the simplest: They deny voters the right to reelect incumbents whom voters favor. Reducing our electoral choices in the name of competition and democracy is like banning abortion in the name of parental autonomy.

PETER H. SCHUCK

New Haven, Connecticut

Inherit the wind

TO THE EDITORS:

There is much that I dispute in Simon Blackburn's generally thoughtful review of my book *The Blank Slate* ("Meet the Flintstones," November 25). But with one topic—the influence of genes, parents, peers, and chance on personality and intelligence—his presentation is so distorted that I must set the record straight. First, Blackburn accuses me of being unaware that estimates of heritability can vary with the homogeneity of the environments in the sample. In fact, I explained this point at length, together with other subtleties of behavioral genetic research, in both chapters where heritability is dis-



cussed. Second, Blackburn is mistaken when he writes that conclusions about the non-negligible heritability of intelligence and personality depend on Cyril Burt's tainted data on twins reared apart. Many subsequent studies have reached the same conclusions. Third, separated twins are not the only evidence of the effects of variation in genes and environments; similar findings emerge from studies of adopted siblings and from comparisons of identical and fraternal twins reared together. Fourth, claims about the limited long-term impact of parenting are corroborated by many other kinds of evidence, such as the lack of substantial effects of birth order, day care, and non-traditional households and the fact that children of immigrants end up with the language and skills of their peer group, not of their parents. Incidentally, it is disingenuous of Blackburn to "suspect" that I know that cultural resources other than science should not be jettisoned when it comes to understanding human nature. That was the whole point of my concluding chapter.

STEVEN PINKER

*Peter de Florez Professor
MacVicar Faculty Fellow
Department of Brain and
Cognitive Sciences*

*Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Cambridge, Massachusetts*

SIMON BLACKBURN REPLIES:

I am sorry my review, which tried to pay tribute to many virtues of his book, should have provoked Steven Pinker. I also apologize for the mistake of saying that he was unaware of the health warnings since I accept that he did indeed

mention them—although it remains my judgment that he did not stress them sufficiently. But then I, too, can mount charges of distortion. I did not say that his conclusions about heritability and personality depend on Burt's tainted data, only that he failed to mention the checkered history of the kind of research on which he seemed to me to be relying (I explicitly talked of the later-separated-twins studies). And I did not say that his views about the negligible effects of parenting depended solely on studies of twins, only that they play the major role in his presentation. As for my last sentence, I will freely delete "I suspect that" Pinker knows many things about culture and environment that fail to fit in with the drumbeat of the book and allow that, somewhat fitfully, he shows that he knows them—although that makes the drumbeat all the more surprising.

Crimson tide

TO THE EDITORS:

We write in response to Franklin Foer's article "Moral Hazard" and in particular the comments of Khaled Abou El Fadl and Martin Kramer suggesting that "Saudi contributions" to Harvard Law School and its Islamic Legal Studies Program (ILSP) have stifled "secular analyses" and hindered "critical" scholarship (November 18). These insinuations are false, and THE NEW REPUBLIC's willingness to indulge in them is irresponsible. As students and researchers at Harvard University, we each have some kind of contact or affiliation with the ILSP. We engage with a diversity of methods, subject matters, and an overall approach to not only Islamic law as classically understood but also contemporary laws that affect Muslim communities anywhere they are found, including the United States, Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. The rigorously intellectual environment of the ILSP provides a forum for the open exchange of ideas such as those found in other leading research environments in which we individually have been a part. If Foer had spent just one day in the ILSP offices, queried just one ILSP affiliate, or made the effort to speak with the director, Professor Frank Vogel, all of this would have been immediately apparent.

JEFF REDDING
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*Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts*

TO THE EDITORS:

Your profile of Professor Abou El Fadl contains an unfounded accusation and requires a correction for the record. Abou El Fadl accuses the Harvard Law School Islamic Legal Studies Program, and Professor Frank Vogel in particular, of distorting the study of Islamic law to secure funds from Saudi interests.

Since no one at Harvard Law School, including Professor Vogel, was offered the opportunity to respond to these charges, let me state for the record that Saudi Arabia has never put any "strings" on its two endowment gifts to the law school (except that the funds be used to study Islamic law in general) and has never attempted, even once, to influence the scholarship done by the ILSP or by Professor Vogel.

As stated in its charter, and as shown by its record, the ILSP has a goal of advancing the objective understanding of the immensely diverse phenomenon of law in Islamic civilization. Given the nature of this undertaking, it would not only have been wrong but also impossible for the program to align itself with anyone's position on Islamic law—whether Abou El Fadl's or the Saudi government's.

In today's post-September 11 world, objective and comprehensive scholarship on Islamic law is all the more needed and all the harder to find. It is not the time to make unsubstantiated attacks on those attempting to meet that need.

ROBERT C. CLARK
*Dean
Harvard Law School
Cambridge, Massachusetts*

FRANKLIN FOER REPLIES:

The Saudi royal family has gifted millions to the Harvard Law School Islamic Legal Studies Program. Dean Clark and the authors of the other letter plead that Saudi Arabia has never pulled any strings at the school. Their claim misses the point made by Professors Abou El Fadl and Kramer in my piece: Saudi contributions spawn sins of omission; programs that receive money remain silent about the regime's indisputable authoritarianism. Unfortunately, the ILSP professors fit this model snugly. The professors can't cite any papers or books they've generated

continued on page 37

Florida
Oranges
From
Maine?

TRB

FROM CAPE TOWN

Wait Time

SOUTH AFRICAN PRESIDENT Thabo Mbeki has a big idea. And, while it's virtually unknown in the United States, in South Africa it has attained what University of the Witwatersrand political scientist Tom Lodge calls "almost liturgical status." The idea is that, under Mbeki's leadership, South Africa is ushering in a continentwide "African Renaissance." This renaissance, in Mbeki's vision, is about genuine modernization, in contrast to the artificial, failed modernization that characterized the first decades of African independence. It means assimilating Western technology—not just importing it, but integrating it with traditional African values so it no longer feels alien. And, even more importantly, it means assimilating democratic values—giving substance to the veneer of parliamentary democracy that has characterized despotic post-colonial African government. Just as Africans must make the Internet their own, he argues, they must internalize democracy as well. It is time, Mbeki announced in 1998, to "put behind us the notions of democracy and human rights as peculiarly Western."

Coming from the democratically elected leader of Africa's most powerful country, those are important words. They implicitly repudiate the relativistic nonsense that African dictators and their Western sycophants have long peddled to justify the continent's tyrannies. And they form the moral foundation for a kind of grand bargain: Africa's leaders will demand democracy across the continent, and the United States and Europe will reward them by substantially boosting foreign aid. The outlines of such a bargain began taking shape in 2001, when Mbeki helped create something called the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD). In June 2002, it was endorsed by the G-8 economic powers. In July, it won the endorsement of the African Union. Just as Mbeki hoped, Africa seemed to be embarking on a new partnership with the world.

There's just one problem: Mbeki himself. His behavior is betraying his vi-

sion. And with his blessing, Zimbabwe is turning his African Renaissance into an ugly joke.

In the last two years, Robert Mugabe has put his country on the fast lane to hell. And Mbeki's government has cheered him on. Mugabe's campaign of terror began in June 2000, after the opposition Movement for Democratic Change came from nowhere to claim close to half of the contested seats in parliament. Mugabe responded with a two-pronged strategy aimed at securing victory in the presidential elections due in 2002. First, he whipped up racial hatred by sending government goons to chase white farmers off their land. Second, he began plotting to rig the vote. And Pretoria helpfully facilitated both. In December, after months of continuous, often violent, land invasions, a delegation from the Southern African Development Community—of which South Africa is the most powerful member—lauded Zimbabwe's "improved atmosphere of calm and stability." Not long afterward, as Lodge notes in *Politics in South Africa: From Mandela to Mbeki*, the leader of an African National Congress (ANC) delegation to Zimbabwe announced that he was "deeply satisfied" by Mugabe's opposition to allowing foreign monitors to observe the upcoming presidential vote.

Mugabe eventually relented, allowing select foreign delegations to observe the campaign. What they found, in the words of University of London Professor Stephen Chan, author of *Robert Mugabe: A Life of Power and Violence*, was "a massive and sustained program of brutalities and persecutions, of beatings and murders, of coercion and threats." The head of the Zimbabwe Election Support Network, an alliance of local civic groups, said, "There is no way these elections could be described as substantially free and fair." State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said the election "was won by intimidation and not by votes." But the South African government's monitoring team disagreed, calling the vote "legitimate."

After the election, things went from bad to worse. By late 2002, Mugabe's land invasions had replaced many white farmers with corrupt party cronies. And, even where needy black farmers did get land, the government failed to give them the seeds, fertilizer, and equipment to produce crops. As a result, in the last year farm production has fallen 50 percent, and the country's economy has contracted by more than one-tenth. Zimbabwe, once a major agricultural exporter, has begun importing grain. But the government is denying it to people who voted for the

opposition. Current estimates suggest that half the country faces starvation.

In response to these atrocities, the United States, Britain, and the European Union have imposed sanctions. South Africa, by contrast, has announced plans to *increase* economic cooperation with its neighbor to the north. In October, Mbeki said, "We are not going to act on the Zimbabwe question with a view to punishment." He followed that up in December by calling Mugabe's party, Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), "our ally and fellow liberation movement." And, at the ANC's national conference that month, ZANU-PF came to say thank you. Emmerson Mnangagwa, the speaker of Zimbabwe's parliament and a close Mugabe ally, told cheering ANC delegates, "On numerous occasions, you have sought to clarify the position in Zimbabwe in response to our detractors." Indeed, to Mbeki and the ANC's enduring discredit, it has.

The simplistic explanation of Mbeki's behavior is that he is a would-be Mugabe himself, plotting to impose authoritarian, demagogic rule in South Africa. The truth is more complicated: Mbeki has actually pursued an aggressively free-market economic policy, one that has brought him into conflict with longtime ANC allies in the labor movement and the South African Communist Party. His refusal to condemn Mugabe, like his earlier flirtation with Afrocentric AIDS quackery, more likely stems from a fear of being seen as insufficiently radical by the ANC's militant political base.

But, whatever the reason, Mbeki's pro-Mugabe policy is making a mockery of his vision for the continent. The European Union, the likely source of much of the NEPAD aid Mbeki hopes to procure, has already implied that it considers Zimbabwe a test of African leaders' seriousness about democracy. If the West does not substantially aid Mbeki's grand compact, left-leaning critics will undoubtedly attack U.S. and European leaders as cynics who talk big about Africa's future but don't follow through when it counts. And that's partially true. But what about the grandiose cynic in Pretoria? Morgan Tsvangirai, the Zimbabwean opposition leader now potentially facing the death penalty for treason, recently said, "You know this is the saddest thing about Africa, all these flowery declarations and all without commitment. . . . The declarations are not worth the paper they're written on." Looks like the true African Renaissance will have to wait.

PETER BEINART

Champagne Not From Champagne?

• *No way!*

Oh, sure, some sparkling wines may look and even taste the part, but if it's not from Champagne, it's simply not true Champagne. That's because Champagne isn't merely a type of wine. It's a specific region 90 miles east of Paris with a long history of winemaking expertise.

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And, if it's not from Champagne, it's simply not true Champagne.



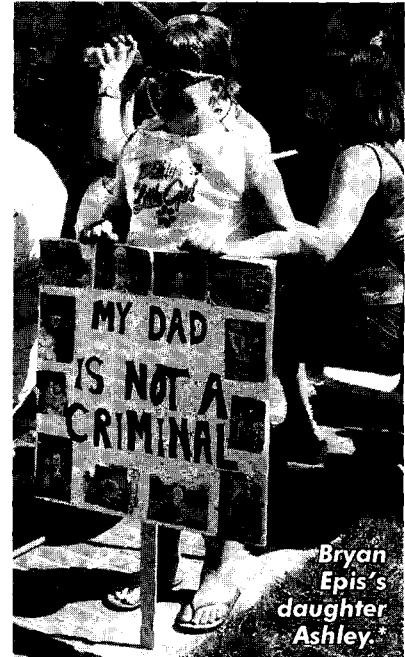
Champagne
is from Champagne



Will You Help Ashley and Her Dad?

Federal prosecutors won't permit court testimony concerning why marijuana was used, even though marijuana is permitted as medicine under the laws of California and eight other states.

And because juries have no way of knowing otherwise, Federal prosecutors accuse patients and good Samaritans of being "Drug King Pins."



Bryan
Epis's
daughter
Ashley.

How can judges and jurors dispense "justice and mercy" without relevant information?

According to a TIME / CNN poll, 80% of Americans approve of medical marijuana.

Please urge Attorney General Ashcroft to permit the presentation of all of the evidence. And ask your congressman and senators to pass a law preventing future concealment.

Will You Act?

* Bryan Epis was sentenced to ten years. The story the jury did not hear: In 1983, while in high school, Bryan was a passenger in a car that hit a telephone pole. The car decelerated from 35 mph to 0 in 20 milliseconds. Bryan had lacerations all over his body, 15 inches of lacerations in his skull, his sternum was fractured and two ribs were broken. The T2 and T3 vertebrae suffered compression fractures. The surgery just to stitch his head together lasted 2½ hours. He was in a coma for two days, and intensive care for three days. The surgeon said he was lucky not to be a vegetable or dead. Bryan began two years of physical therapy. He was told that the compression fractures would never heal, and they haven't. He suffers from chronic pain. He was prescribed heavy narcotic and narcotic derivative drugs, codeine and Vicodin for the pain. In 1983, his orthopedic surgeon recommended marijuana as a drug that could relieve pain better than the narcotics. Bryan used cannabis from 1983 to 1997. Using marijuana in combination with exercise, he reduced the pain level from level 10 to level 1. While using cannabis in his treatment, he finished high school; finished the grueling program for a Bachelor of Science degree in Electrical Engineering from California State University at Chico in May 1991 (only 1 in 5 who enter the program graduate); and finished law school at California Northern School of Law in May 1998. Bryan's explanation for growing the marijuana was that he needed it to alleviate his pain and to help other seriously ill patients.

Kevin B. Zeese, President, Common Sense for Drug Policy

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Too Rich

IN 2001, PRESIDENT BUSH successfully sold a \$1.6 trillion tax cut by promising that it would not preclude generous increases in social spending and a virtual elimination of the national debt. Early in 2002, those promises were already

coming undone. But did Bush scale back his tax cut? No, he persuaded Congress to pass an additional \$114 billion in business tax breaks as "economic stimulus." Now, with the federal budget deep in debt for years to come and the administration still facing the potential costs of a war with Iraq and a prescription-drug benefit, you might think Bush would seek to restore a semblance of fiscal sanity. Instead, he is demanding yet another \$674 billion in additional tax cuts.

Of the many dishonesties surrounding Bush's latest economic stimulus plan, undoubtedly the most important is the notion that it is, in any meaningful sense, an economic stimulus plan. The Keynesian concept behind economic stimulus is that the government can help manage the business cycle by encouraging consumer demand during recessions, either by cutting taxes or boosting its own spending. A stimulus measure, then, should by definition be temporary (since it is designed to counteract the business cycle) and targeted at those most likely to spend any additional money—that is, those with lower incomes. Bush's plan, by contrast, is permanent (just under \$100 billion of it would take effect within the next year) and overwhelmingly directed at the well-to-do. Bush's economic advisers maintain that the centerpiece of their plan, eliminating the tax on dividend income, will boost the stock market and therefore boost consumer spending (see "Wealthy Choice," page 13). But, in the long run—after the downturn ends—the bigger economic problem will be the nation's low savings rate. Instituting a permanent change that encourages people to spend more and save less will be utterly counterproductive.

Even putting aside its dubious value as stimulus, eliminating the dividend tax is questionable policy. Bush frames it as an issue of justice. "It's not fair to double-tax by taxing the shareholder on the same profits," he announced in his Chicago speech this week. It's true that dividend taxation, which often comes on top of the corporate income tax, can constitute a form of double taxation. Yet the bigger problem

with the corporate income tax is that it has been steadily reduced by loopholes to the point where less than half of corporate income is taxed at all. It might make sense to eliminate dividend taxes as part of a broad corporate tax reform that would close these loopholes. But Bush isn't actually interested in what's "fair"—he's interested in corporations and the well-off paying as little tax as is politically feasible.

The other large element of Bush's plan, the acceleration of future income tax cuts, is intended to lock the 2001 tax cut into place before the public becomes aware of the size of the deficits it has created. In a way, this should not be surprising. The economists, and pseudo-economists, who advise Bush are not Keynesians; they're supply-siders. They don't believe in "stimulus." The only circumstance under which Bush would accede to a true stimulus (as he acceded to the Democratic tax-rebate plan in 2001) would be as a grudging price to be paid for the acceptance of his non-stimulus tax cuts.

The danger now is a repeat of 2002, with enough Democrats and moderate Republicans convinced of the need for economic stimulus that they agree to a "compromise" plan with the White House. Right now, with growth expected to turn up next year, it's unclear whether or not any stimulus is needed at all. On balance, it would probably be worthwhile to pass something like what the Democrats have proposed: a relatively small (\$136 billion) package with fiscal effects that will expire after a year. What would not be remotely worthwhile is a compromise plan that combined the Democrats' temporary stimulus measures with some fraction (\$300 billion? \$400 billion?) of Bush's permanent, non-stimulus tax cut for the wealthy. Therefore the Democrats, and moderate Republicans, must prepare themselves to reject any action at all.

The trouble is that they've shown no willingness to do so in the past. The news media is heavily biased toward action and against inaction. "Bipartisanship" is good. "Doing something about the economy" is good. "Obstructionism" is bad. Bush's opponents fear that if they stymie action, the public will blame them if the economy sours further. But Congress has already given Bush two tax cuts, neither of which contained much economic stimulus and neither of which has shown signs of sating his appetite for lowering taxes on the rich. Eventually, those who care about fiscal responsibility are going to have to deny Bush his tax cuts. Now is as good a time to start as any. ■

OH, THAT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DEFICITS AND INTEREST RATES:

Last week in these pages, senior editor Jonathan Chait explained why the administration's recent claim that deficits don't matter—an argument being pushed primarily by Glenn Hubbard, chairman of the president's Council of Economic Advisers—is not to be believed (see “Bad Debt,” January 13). Now, it turns out that Hubbard himself doesn't believe it. Hubbard's line of late has been that, contrary to long-standing economic consensus and the law of supply and demand, deficits don't raise long-term interest rates. (Asked about the relationship last month, he sneered, “That's Rubinomics, and we think it's completely wrong.”) Pity Hubbard hasn't bothered to share his new theory with Pearson Publishing. As Berkeley economist Brad DeLong pointed out this week on his website (j-bradford-delong.net), “In 2002 Pearson ... published the fourth edition of Glenn Hubbard's *Money, the Financial System, and the Economy*. And this book certainly teaches that higher deficits raise interest rates.” As DeLong notes, Hubbard's textbook goes so far as to quantify the relationship, noting that “a one-dollar increase in government spending raises interest rates by: $(1/(c1 + a + d))$ [a]nd a one-dollar decrease in taxes raises interest rates by: $(c1/(c1 + a + d))$.” Alas, the book provides no mathematical formula for determining for how much Hubbard's dishonest shilling for the White House decreases his credibility as an economist. Perhaps in the fifth edition?

DOWN THE TUBE: Staunch anti-terrorism has never

exactly been a hallmark of the foreign policy of South Africa's ruling African National Congress (ANC). Former President Nelson Mandela maintained an infamous friendship with Libya's Muammar Qaddafi. Current President Thabo Mbeki has denounced U.S. war plans in Iraq. And last year, South African Foreign Minister Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma praised “Iran's activities against racism” during a three-day visit to Iran. But the ANC broke new ground in politically correct lunacy last week when, according to South Africa's *The Star* newspaper, it encouraged the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) to dump CNN in favor of Arabic-language Al Jazeera. “We can only interpret this planned action ... as diversity of news and exposing South Africans to events happening in other parts of the world,” ANC spokesman Smuts Ngonyama blandly explained about a network that, as Fouad Ajami has noted in *The New York Times Magazine*, features “a huge, glamorous poster of [Osama] bin Laden's silhouette ... in the background” of its main studio. As it happens, less than a week after *The Star's* report, Australia warned its citizens that South Africa was a possible site of future terrorist attacks. The ANC government responded indignantly that it was perfectly capable of stopping Islamist terrorists from infiltrating into the country. Perhaps it plans to quarantine them on television.

FATHER'S DAY: Over the years, political observers have

become all too familiar with the tradition of Capitol Hill nepotism, wherein a senior member of Congress retires and immediately begins paving the way for his son or daughter to succeed him. (Evan Bayh, Harold Ford Jr., and Charlie Gonzalez are just a few of the fortunate sons who come to mind.) But at least the process has traditionally required victory at the ballot box, giving voters the opportunity to accept or reject the proffered dynasties. (Scott Armey's bid to succeed dad Dick, for example, was foiled when he lost in the GOP primary last spring.) In the last few weeks, however, outgoing Alaska Senator Frank Murkowski has managed to remove voters from the equation altogether. After being elected governor of Alaska this past November, Murkowski wound up with the unusual power to appoint his own successor. Initially, Murkowski made an ostentatious show of the seriousness with which he approached this task, releasing a list of fully 26 possible replacements. He even conducted several interviews before making an announcement that now looks preordained: He chose his own daughter, Lisa, to take his place. The younger Murkowski, who was due to become majority leader of the statehouse this year, is not a complete political neophyte. But it's hard to imagine that she would have been chosen had her last name been, say, Jones. (Among other things, Lisa is moderate on abortion issues while her father is a firm pro-lifer.) We congratulate Frank Murkowski on pulling off an increasingly difficult feat in Washington: setting a new standard for shamelessness.

PUFF PEACE: When Congress granted President Bush

fast-track trade authority last summer, many Democrats fretted that it would result in trade agreements that paid scant attention to labor and environmental concerns. What they didn't anticipate was that it would help American cigarette manufacturers—who face a dwindling market domestically—push their products abroad. Last month, the president inked a seminal fast-track accord with Chile that abolishes tariffs on 85 percent of traded consumer and industrial goods. From the outset of the trade meetings, U.S. Trade Representative Robert Zoellick asserted that U.S. tobacco products sold in Chile would not be included in the agreement. And, as late as the day before the negotiation deadline, administration officials continued to promise that, due to public health concerns, the White House would not press Chile to open its borders to U.S. cigarettes. But a funny thing happened on the way to Patagonia. In the final hours of the trade talks, the administration quietly reversed its policy and eliminated the 8 percent tobacco tariff. The implications are clear: As the World Health Organization has documented, lower tariffs (and thus lower prices) result in a dramatic increase in cigarette consumption—a particular danger in countries, such as Chile, that already have high rates of tobacco addiction among the young. Despite the fact

that many members of Congress likely oppose eliminating the tobacco tariff, their only option under fast-track rules is to vote against the entire trade bill—an unlikely order considering that Chile has the most market-friendly economy in Latin America. Distressing though it is, the White House's deference to Big Tobacco is hardly novel: For months, Bush's delegation to the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) in Geneva has been an industry puppet, advocating ten out of eleven deletions specifically requested by the tobacco companies. As one spectator to the most recent FCTC round put it, "The Bush administration is taking a hard line here that they would never dare to take back home." But what is most ominous about the Chile pact is that, in the words of *The New York Times*, "the administration hopes [it] will become a springboard for negotiating a broader agreement for the entire Western Hemisphere." Which makes us think that Bush's dead-of-night favor to the tobacco industry may be just the beginning.

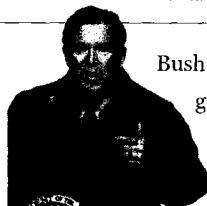
COMPASSIONATE CONSERVATISM, CONTINUED: "House Republicans weakened their own ethics rules yesterday, pushing through language that would allow lobbyists to cater meals to members' offices and let charities pay for lawmakers to travel and stay at golf resorts and other locales."—*The Washington Post*, January 8

THE FRUITS OF WINTER: We are delighted to celebrate a new harvest of books by our contributors: *The Here and Now* (St. Martin's) by Gregg Easterbrook, a haunting novel about the moral education of a middle-aged American man; *Lost in America: A Journey with My Father*, by Sherwin B. Nuland (Knopf), a harrowing and beautiful memoir; *Something for Nothing: Luck in America*, by Jackson Lears (Viking Penguin), a genuinely original study of the American character that enjoyed some of its gestation in our pages; *Authentically Black: Essays for the Black Silent Majority* by John McWhorter (Gotham Books), whose against-the-grain thoughts about race in America will be familiar to THE NEW REPUBLIC's readers; and *Risk and Reason: Safety, Law, and the Environment*, by Cass R. Sunstein (Cambridge University), a splendid example of the ways in which "technical" writing serves the public good.

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS: In our December 30 issue, the name of former Alabama Senator Howell Heflin was misstated ("Closed Sessions"). In the same issue, we erroneously reported that "last winter, Bush unsuccessfully pushed for a package of business breaks under the guise of 'stimulus'" ("Special K"). The president was, of course, successful in passing those tax cuts, if not necessarily in stimulating the economy. We regret the errors. ■

WINTER HITS | Bruce Reed

MIDTERM CRISES



Bush tells troops to
get ready for war:
"It's a question of
where, not when."

WHO'S COUNTING?

Bush Labor Dept. stops reporting mass layoffs.
Secretary Chao: "We need to get back to our
core mission—reporting on weak wage
growth and record low job creation."

ANY WHICH WAY BUT LOSE

White House says tax-cut plan is insurance
in case war goes badly. That's funny—
we thought it was the other way around.

PARTY OF LINCOLN

Candidate for Calif. GOP party chair
circulates article saying America
would be better off if South had won
the Civil War. New Republican
bumper sticker: DON'T BLAME ME—
I VOTED FOR JEFFERSON DAVIS.



WE WUZ ROBBED

Senate Repubs let Lott
chair committee that
oversees election reform.
Good thing he doesn't
hold a grudge against
the White House!



BONFIRE OF VANITY



Sharpton says he's most
qualified to be president:
"I even know how to start
wars here at home."

GOOD SAMARITAN

Dr. Frist pulls over to help accident
victims. He's not the first member to carry
a bag, just the first who wasn't on his
way to a fund-raiser.

BUBBLE HEADS

CEA chair Hubbard says eliminating dividend taxes
will boost Dow 20 percent: "The tax code is much
more efficient when stocks are wildly overpriced."

On the Hill Ill Natured

By MICHAEL CROWLEY

LAST MONTH, REPUBLICAN Senator James Inhofe of Oklahoma listened to Trent Lott speak and gave this assessment: "I think that is a stupid statement." Only Inhofe wasn't referring to Lott's repugnant birthday salute to Strom Thurmond. To the contrary, Inhofe calls Thurmond "a great man" and blames Lott's demise on the liberal media. What this snarling conservative actually found so offensive was Lott's subsequent contrition—specifically his public regret for having opposed a national Martin Luther King Jr. holiday. Inhofe wasn't in the Senate at the time, but he wanted to make sure people knew that, had he been there, "I would have voted the same way."

But then, Jim Inhofe has never cared much for mainstream opinion. Although he has attracted little national attention during his 16 years in Congress, he has consistently been among the most bilious and defiant conservatives in Washington. He has compared the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to the Gestapo, vowed not to hire openly gay staffers, and, in the days after September 11, led a craven—and widely denounced—effort to link Alaskan oil-drilling to the attacks and ram it through. Perhaps people ignored Inhofe because for years he was little more than a back-bencher. But lately his influence has grown substantially. In a bit of dark comedy, the Republican conquest of the Senate last year installed Inhofe—a former developer and Congress's top recipient of oil and gas industry contributions—as chairman of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee. Having risen to become the third-ranking GOP member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, he is also becoming a GOP talking head of choice on national security issues.

Now that Republicans control the White House and Congress, their greatest fear is that they will overreach and frighten away voters like Newt Gingrich's revolutionaries did in the mid-'90s. And, if there's anyone liable to send socially moderate suburbanites speeding toward Democrats by the SUV-load, it's Inhofe. Maybe that's why he seems to be trying to moderate his image for the first time. But, to judge from Inhofe's history, one suspects he's less like cooling lava than a briefly dormant volcano.

It would be hard to construct a man who better fits the stereotype of an angry right-winger than Jim Inhofe. For starters, there is his gruff, macho appearance—reminiscent of the cigar-chomping General Jack D. Ripper, the fanatical anti-communist who rants about bodily fluids and touches off nuclear Armageddon in *Dr. Strangelove*. The senator hails from Tulsa, Oklahoma, where he was a real estate developer,

state representative, and mayor—making his name as a scourge of liberals and goody-two-shoes regulators. (Even by Oklahoma standards, Tulsa, home to Oral Roberts University and a 60-foot statue of praying hands, is a conservative place, a ground zero for red-state values.) In 1967, he made his first trip to Washington to testify against Lady Bird Johnson's seemingly unassailable highway beautification project, which sought to limit billboards and junkyards along the nation's new interstates. As a state senator, in 1972, Inhofe declared that Jane Fonda and George McGovern should be hanged for their opposition to the Vietnam War.

Inhofe was elected to the House in 1986 and quickly got to work defending business interests, especially the oil and gas industry. But he was also a rebellious ideologue. In 1993, he drew the acclaim of everyone from Rush Limbaugh to *The New York Times* for a crusade to end the secrecy of House "discharge petitions," signed by members to force votes on stalled legislation. But Inhofe's beef was not so much with secrecy as with impurity within the conservative ranks: Open disclosure, he said at the time, was the only way to expose "the many members who get reelected by voting liberal and having conservative press releases."

Some politicians try to moderate their image when they seek statewide office, but not Inhofe. When he ran for Senate in 1994, he described his own platform as "God, gays, and guns." Once in the Senate, Inhofe quickly became known as a virulent Bill Clinton-basher ("Clinton's unquestionably the worst commander-in-chief in the history of America," he would declare) and an obsessive enemy of bureaucracy and regulation. To Inhofe, even Timothy McVeigh's 1995 terrorist bombing in his own state involved a lazy-bureaucrat subplot. On the day after the catastrophe, as rescue workers combed through the rubble searching for bodies, Inhofe explained to CNN, "We are not sure how many federal employees are missing because we don't know how many were playing hooky." And, when it came to gays, Inhofe was on the furthest fringe. As late as 1993, he ruled out hiring openly gay staffers, telling *The Daily Oklahoman* it could be "disruptive in terms of unit cohesion," as if he were the commander of some crack Capitol Hill platoon. He also led the fight for a gay-marriage ban in 1996. Uglier still was his crusade against Clinton's nomination of James Hormel, an openly gay businessman, to U.S. ambassador to Luxembourg. Although Luxembourg is the size of Rhode Island, and its very existence may be news to many Americans, Inhofe saw a moral outrage. Declaring Hormel "a gay activist who puts his agenda ahead of the agenda of America," he stalled the nomination for two years. (Inhofe, attempting to sound fair-minded, said he would "feel the same way if it were David Duke.")

All this defiant crusading reached its apex in May 1999, when a propeller fell off a small airplane Inhofe was flying over Oklahoma. After landing unscathed, Inhofe insisted that the FBI investigate for signs of sabotage. None were found, but more than one Clinton-bashing website smelled foul play. "Anti-Clinton senator's airplane propeller falls off ... hmm," wrote one. "Inhofe ... believes he's been targeted by 'someone' for an 'Arkancide' and ... even jokes about the

obvious sabotage attempt," added another. Sound crazy? One former top Clinton administration official recounts seeing Inhofe on Capitol Hill soon after the episode and expressing relief that he was unhurt. "You don't mean that," Inhofe coldly replied. "You were hoping that I'd died."

THROUGHOUT HIS CONGRESSIONAL career, Inhofe has applied this level of extremism to the issue over which he now has the most clout: the environment. When Inhofe was passed over for chairman of the environment committee after then-Chairman John Chafee's death in 1999, liberals were horrified at the choice: Senator Bob Smith, who had a nearly pure pro-business record. But Smith told the greens to count their blessings: "You think I'm bad—try Inhofe," he told the National Association of Manufacturers.

He wasn't kidding. Inhofe rails obsessively against environmental laws and their enforcers, especially the EPA. At an Environment and Public Works Committee hearing, he accused the agency of employing "Gestapo tactics" to intimidate small businessmen. Speaking to a group of Oklahoma farmers, he likened Clinton's EPA chief, Carol Browner, to "Tokyo Rose," implying that Browner's pleasant demeanor masked an insidious secret agenda. (Inhofe spent years bullying Browner in Senate hearings.) His nuanced view of the Endangered Species Act was apparent in a 1997 floor debate when he said, "We want to protect the Arkansas River shiner, a bait fish in Oklahoma, yet we will allow unborn babies to have their brains sucked out in a partial-birth abortion." And he is such a zealous advocate of drilling in the Alaskan wilderness that he fought to cram it into an emergency defense spending bill in the days after September 11, 2001—a stunt called "an astonishingly crass move" by the *Chicago Tribune* and "war profiteering" by the *San Francisco Chronicle*; the *Orlando Sentinel* added that Inhofe "should be ashamed." Inhofe has even positioned himself to the right of the Bush administration on the environment. When the White House was under assault this fall from green groups who doubted the toughness of its new "Clear Skies" anti-pollution initiative, Inhofe—though publicly supportive—was reportedly concerned that the measure went too far. "He thinks we're not weakening the Clean Air Act *enough*," says League of Conservation Voters President Deb Callahan.

That sort of talk may worry the White House, where Karl Rove is shrewd enough to know that GOP anti-environmentalism was a key reason the last Republican takeover in Congress ended so quickly. Perhaps for that reason, Inhofe appears to have been restraining himself of late. In his reelection campaign last fall, Inhofe toned down his usual purple rhetoric. Since the elections, Inhofe has lain low—avoiding interviews, "choosing his words carefully and ... trying to soften his image," as *The Washington Post* recently put it. Inhofe "wants to work in a bipartisan way, and he's not looking for fights right off the bat," his spokesman told the *Post*. Instead of railing against the "Gestapo," Inhofe now plays the intellectual, challenging regulations by invoking his favorite catchphrase, "sound science." "This administration is so

clever about the dismantling of the regulatory system, and I'm sure they're working hard to make sure he doesn't disrupt it," says one former Clinton administration official. "If he gets out there and says the things he's said historically, that'll get the press's attention. But right now the administration is sitting below the radar and is just ripping EPA to shreds."

But, given his nature, it won't be easy for Inhofe to behave once he takes over the committee (most likely later this month). For instance, he may soon be faced with the Mother of All Environmental Battles, as Joe Lieberman and John McCain say they are preparing to push an aggressive plan—sure to be furiously opposed by Inhofe's energy patrons—to lower emissions that may be causing global warming. What's more, Inhofe probably doesn't think that moderation—as opposed to butt-kicking conservatism—is the path to political success. Just think back to June 2001. George W. Bush had just passed his enormous tax cut, named John Ashcroft attorney general, and was pushing ahead with missile defense. But Inhofe was already warning the White House against moving to the left. "[H]is daddy did the same thing—to get elected and move to the left. ... If he does ... he won't get reelected in 2004," Inhofe grouched. That suggests Inhofe may not want to play the nice guy for long. Of course, it's also possible that a fire-breathing Inhofe is just what Bush wants, a foil against which he can cast himself as a moderate. "He may be so far out there that he makes the White House look palatable," Callahan says. Want it or not, Bush may have no choice. ■

White House Watch Wealthy Choice

By RYAN LIZZA

ON THE AFTERNOON of President Bush's economic speech this Tuesday, there was no happier Republican in Washington than Grover Norquist, the president of Americans for Tax Reform, conservative-coalition builder, and the White House's favorite anti-tax radical. Like many conservatives, Norquist has long fought to kill the tax on dividends, and he was giddy that Bush made that the centerpiece of his new tax plan. He had just come from a debate on National Public Radio in which he eviscerated a "midget commie from Massachusetts"—former Clinton administration Labor Secretary Robert Reich—and couldn't wait to square off Thursday on Bill Moyers's PBS show, which he "thinks" is called "Why we should steal everyone's money and give it to bums who won't work." He was looking forward to meetings on Friday with Dick Cheney and Karl Rove, presumably to plot a strategy for getting the new plan passed. Norquist insists the dividend tax-cut debate will be devastating for his opposition. "We are going to cripple the entire Democratic leadership all at once," he predicts. "I'm winning on all fronts."

It wasn't obvious, however, that this was the front the Bush administration wants attacked. In fact, in the pantheon of taxes that conservatives like Norquist have fought to eliminate, the tax paid by shareholders on their dividends has never quite caught on like the "death tax" or "marriage penalty." First of all, very few people actually pay it; only one-quarter of all tax-filers currently receive dividends. And, for Republicans defensive about tax cuts skewed toward the ultra-wealthy, a crusade against the dividend tax confirms their opponents' worst suspicions: More than 70 percent of the benefits of eliminating it will go to the wealthiest 5 percent of American taxpayers.

Why then has the Bush administration suddenly taken an issue dear to a handful of anti-tax cranks and made it the cornerstone of its economic policy? Partly it's because the administration thinks it can make the politics work. But mainly it's because conservatives inside and outside the White House fervently believe that the key to economic health (and Bush's reelection) is a booming stock market.

DEMOCRATS ARE ALREADY calling the tax cut a payoff to Bush's K Street allies. But that analysis doesn't quite hold up. To begin with, the case against the dividend tax is that it is "double taxation"; corporations pay a tax on their profits, and then investors pay a tax when they receive those profits as dividends. If Bush really wanted to reward the business community, he would have proposed eliminating this tax at the corporate end. But, fearing being tarred as too close to corporations, he rejected this approach. The other problem with the simple K Street explanation is that the business community hasn't been clamoring for a dividend tax cut. What corporations really wanted from Bush were new tax incentives for investment—and they didn't get them.

In fact, Bush's embrace of the dividend tax cut is less about campaign contributions than ideology. In the past, liberals and conservatives both discounted the stock market's role in stimulating the economy. But, during the Clinton boom, this view began to change. Most famously, Alan Greenspan warned that overvalued markets could actually cause inflation. Economists call it the "wealth effect," and now Bush and his aides have become its greatest champions. Simply put, the wealth effect is the extra dollar amount a person spends from an increase in wealth. The theory is that the 1990s stock boom dramatically increased the net wealth of many Americans. The stock market soared, investors' portfolios fattened, and—at least on paper—investors' net wealth shot up, leading them to consume more. Even if they didn't have actual extra income, they felt rich and therefore spent more and saved less. That investor-class consumption drove the '90s economy. By making the dividend tax cut the centerpiece of his economic plan, Bush is embracing the idea that the stock market is the most important economic indicator in the United States—in other words, he's embracing the wealth effect.

The most influential work on the wealth effect has been done by Michael Palumbo, a Federal Reserve Board economist. In a recent study, he and another Board economist,

Dean Maki, showed for the first time that in the '90s the households that gained the most from the stock-market boom are the same households responsible for the era's plummeting savings rate. Almost all the drops in savings in the late '90s—from about 7 percent of disposable income to about 1 percent—can be attributed to the richest 20 percent of households. The savings rate of the bottom 80 percent—the people least likely to own stocks—barely changed. Another influential paper, by Maki and fellow Board economist Karen Dynan, looked at data from 1983 to 1999 and clearly showed that stock-owning households spend more after stock prices rise, while non-stock-owning households don't.

The most radical part of Palumbo's work is his rejection of the traditional economic view that to stimulate the economy, cash must be pumped into the hands of lower-income Americans—in the form of a quick rebate check or payroll tax holiday, for example—because they are more likely than the wealthy to spend that extra disposable income. For adherents of the wealth effect, the way to boost consumption is to make relatively wealthy investors feel richer by juicing the stock market. One of the main critiques of the wealth effect was that it was impossible that the small slice of shareholding households was responsible for so much extra spending. But Palumbo says that is exactly what happened. "[A]ll of the consumption boom [of the '90s] really can be attributed to the richest groups of households," his paper argues.

You won't hear the White House making this point publicly, but the Bushies believe that returning cash to rich investors is their insurance policy against a bad economy in 2004. While Greenspan worried about the inflationary impact of the wealth effect, that danger has obviously passed. Now the danger is that battered investors will stop consuming. In a recent speech, Bush's top economist and the architect of the new plan, Glenn Hubbard, noted, "One of the key risks obviously now in the economy's recovery are recent equity price declines in the United States. And you know there's something called a wealth effect, an effect on consumer spending and business spending when wealth is destroyed, much as we have seen in the decline in stock-market prices in the United States."

What worries Hubbard and the White House is that more than \$7 trillion in value has been wiped out of the stock market over the last three years. According to the wealth effect, consumption should be plummeting in the wake of the market's decline, and yet consumer spending has continued to hold up the economy. One reason for this is that the enormous decline in the value of stocks has been cushioned by an incredible rise in the value of homes. "Fortunately, the losses in stock wealth to the midpoint of 2002 have been partly offset by gains in real estate wealth in the United States," an analysis from the financial services firm RBC recently noted. But wealth effect advocates also attribute the continued spending to the slow pace at which investors fully adjust to their decreased wealth. In other words, the predicted drop in consumption may well kick in this year.

For the White House, that means stimulating the stock market is more important than ever. Bush's aides argue that the dividend tax cut will bring investors flooding back into

the market and raise share prices by 10 percent, which will presumably keep consumption high as shareholders start to feel wealthy again.

This emphasis on the investor class dovetails with the politics of Bush's reelection. He cares about how the economy will look to voters in 2004, not today. If the dividend tax cut has any impact on the markets and consumption, it won't be until next year, when Bush is campaigning. Bush is also trying to appeal to the two-thirds of voters who own stocks. The Democrats failed to capitalize on the bear market in the last election, and Bush wants to put them on the defensive about an issue supposedly dear to investors. "They are all getting locked in as enemies of the investor class," says one Republican strategist. And whereas in the 1970s and 1980s unemployment and inflation were the key indicators of economic performance to the public, the White House has come to believe that the stock market is now the key barometer. "There is a new number, and it is wealth," says Norquist. If the economy cooperates with these politics, the White House will have invested well. ■

Istanbul Dispatch

Trade Partners

By HASSAN FATTAH

BALLOONS FLEW, BANNERS waved, and horns squealed as more than 10,000 Turks marched along a highway in Istanbul last month to protest America's likely war with Iraq. It was the country's largest war protest to date, reflecting Turkey's general displeasure with U.S. policy. The 140 primarily left-wing groups that showed up that day sought to send a message to the recently elected, Islamic-oriented Justice and Development Party (AKP). "America," they belated, "we will not be your soldiers."

Yet notably absent in the crowd were Turkey's well-organized Islamic groups, traditionally effective protest leaders. In 1998, the Islamic groups organized what is said to be one of the largest demonstrations ever staged, a human chain of Turkish women stretching from Istanbul to Ankara to protest laws restricting the Islamic headscarf. And, in the past, much of the Islamists' rhetoric has emphasized their sympathy with Iraq. But, last month, Turkey's well-oiled Islamic political machine was a no-show. "People would have expected a larger turnout [of Islamists] at the demonstration," admits Ayse Erzan, one of the organizers of the march. But "the Islamists are now in power and can exercise their cards differently."

Indeed, in an ironic twist, the AKP, whose members used

to be counted on to back Saddam, now quietly supports U.S.-led military action and may benefit from the war more than any other organization in Turkey. An Iraq conflict will allow the AKP to demand significant aid from Washington. More important, wrangling over the conflict has provided the party with an opportunity to show themselves as responsible leaders looking out for Turkey's best interests. And, by supporting the war, the AKP can keep the secular Turkish army in its barracks, thereby consolidating the Islamic party's hold on power.

WASHINGTON IS ASKING a lot of Turkey. Throughout the fall and winter, Bush administration officials have made pilgrimages to Ankara to obtain permission for the United States to use Turkish airbases, ports, and railroads for the Iraq conflict. The United States also may want to deploy tens of thousands of troops to Turkey and ask Turkey to deploy troops of its own in northern Iraq. "These are not small favors that the U.S. is asking of Turkey," says Cengiz Candar, a political analyst and columnist with the Turkish daily *Yeni Safak*. "Any government would find itself in a difficult situation [to deliver them]."

In public, AKP Prime Minister Abdullah Gul and other leaders have expressed doubts about the campaign against Iraq: Gul and AKP leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan both have said they are opposed to any war in Iraq that proceeds without U.N. backing. But, at the same time, they have tacitly agreed to America's Iraq strategy. A self-avowed "pious" Muslim, Gul set off on a tour of capitals throughout the Arab-Muslim world, including Cairo and Damascus, earlier this month to "prevent this war" through concerted regional diplomacy; behind closed doors, however, Gul was expected to make the case for action against Iraq. This trip will underscore the Bush administration's contention that regime change in Baghdad is in Muslim countries' strategic interest and that a conflict with Iraq would not be a war against Islam.

But the "favors" go both ways. Erdogan, Gul, and other AKP leaders have used their talks with the United States as a chance to obtain concessions for Turkey. With memories of the financial crisis caused by the Gulf war of 1991 still fresh—Turkey says it has lost up to \$40 billion in trade with Iraq over the past decade—the AKP has demanded up to \$28 billion in financial incentives from Washington for its support of the war, according to Turkish news reports. What's more, Erdogan and his peers have asked the United States for guarantees that Kurdish nationalists will not be allowed to create a Kurdish state in northern Iraq and that a flood of Kurdish refugees will not stream into Turkey during an Iraq war. Erdogan's party also has requested aggressive support from Washington for Turkey's bid to join the European Union. And President Bush has responded: Last month, he led a vocal, but ultimately unsuccessful, U.S. campaign to cajole EU leaders into moving ahead with negotiations over Turkey's membership.

Yet the real payoff from the negotiations will accrue as much to the AKP—and its deft politicians—as to Turkey in

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general. Though the AKP won a plurality of votes in the recent election, it still has to contend with a variety of opposition parties. What's more, many Turks remain suspicious of the party's stated goals of marrying traditional Turkish Islam with a respect for the secular state—nothing short of a Turkish version of the Protestant Reformation (see "Reform Party," December 16, 2002). And Erdogan himself, though popular in Turkey, was not well-known in the West before the run-up to the election. When Erdogan visited Washington in January 2002, only 20 people reportedly came to hear him speak at a reception held at a D.C. think tank.

America's stamp of approval changes a lot, however. By working closely with the United States, the AKP has obtained the imprimatur of legitimacy, an image that the United States views Erdogan's party, more than Turkey's other political actors, as the linchpin of Turkey's future. Last December, less than one year after his sparsely attended Washington reception, Erdogan landed on the White House steps for a meeting with President Bush. "Considering the shaky ground the AKP stands on, the fact that Erdogan meets with the president of the United States gives him lots of legitimacy," says Soli Ozel, a professor at Bilgi University in Istanbul.

BACKING AMERICA'S STANCE on Iraq will also allow the AKP to smooth over its uneasy relationship with the army, guardians of Turkey's secular order—and the key player that the AKP needs to subdue to consolidate its hold on power. In 1997, the army pushed Necmettin Erbakan's Islamist Welfare Party out of power, and, in 2001, it closed down Virtue, another pro-Islamic party. Erdogan himself was banned from politics by the secularists in 1997 for espousing Islamist ideals, which is why he has not yet taken an official position in the AKP-led government.

In the year and a half since the AKP was formed, Erdogan has gone to great lengths to show that his party is made up of pious Muslims who believe in a secular government. Nonetheless, the army has continued to view the AKP skeptically. When the AKP speaker of the parliament, Bulent Arinc, appeared at an official function with his headscarfed wife, the generals chastised him for her choice of garb.

But Erdogan's Iraq policy has stopped the generals from treating the AKP too harshly. "Erdogan's basically telling the army, 'Look, I believe what you believe.' That helps him consolidate his position and put himself on the same side as the army," notes Bulent Aliriza, senior associate at the Center for Strategic & International Studies, a Washington think tank. Even if the generals remain skeptical, the attention paid to Erdogan by the United States and Europe has tied the army's hands: By making itself central to the Iraq discussions, the AKP has managed to bolster its political standing as Turkey's real leadership. Only when "there is a lack of political will, the army will interfere," says Nazli Ilicak, a political analyst and former M.P. "[Erdogan] has a political will and doesn't just [concede] everything to the army."

Yet, despite their skillful politicking, the AKP is still walking a tightrope, risking the alienation of their conservative

Muslim base in an effort to boost their power and push their Islamic Reformation. Most Turks remain extremely uncomfortable with the idea of a conflict with Baghdad, and the more the AKP supports the United States on Iraq, the higher the stakes will get. If and when war erupts, Erdogan's party could find themselves facing much larger street protests.

Still, the AKP bosses believe that as long as they show how their Iraq policy benefits both Turkey and the party, most Turks won't take to the streets. The secret, says Murat Mercan, the AKP's deputy chairman, is in how the process itself plays out. "We will benefit in all this," Mercan says. "It all depends on the process." By keeping the discussions open and transparent, in sharp contrast to past administrations, the AKP can build public trust and keep its opponents at bay, he says. If all goes as planned, the Iraq war could unexpectedly help consolidate the first Islamic secular democracy the world has known. ■

Stop arming Southeast Asia.

Off Guard

By JOSHUA KURLANTZICK

THE HEADQUARTERS OF Thailand's immigration bureau, which is charged with blocking terrorist networks from entering the country, is hardly cutting edge. Hundreds of officers sit at tiny desks, many with no phones or other connections to the outside world. Instead of computerized records, huge stacks of paper litter the bureau's desks, halls, and stairwells.

Yet, despite the bureau's lack of resources, its officers have won several recent victories against terrorism. According to foreign counterterrorism experts based in Bangkok, the Thai have used old-fashioned legwork—increasing scrutiny of incoming flights and reducing visas—to upgrade security at Bangkok Airport, making it much harder for militants to enter the kingdom. "It is not easy to just slip in anymore," says one top Thai immigration official. "But we need more money and cooperation from foreign governments to really crack down."

Unfortunately, his wish is unlikely to come true. The Bush administration has made Southeast Asia a priority in the war on terrorism. But, instead of bolstering cash-strapped intelligence and civilian agencies, it has sent money and training to the region's corrupt militaries. That is a mistake. While civilian organizations are making strides in combating terror, the same cannot be said about the Indonesian, Malaysian, Philippine, and Thai militaries, which are not only brutal but in many cases have ties to Islamic militants themselves. U.S. aid for these armies may backfire, fueling more radicalism and terror.

EVEN BEFORE September 11, 2001, Deputy Defense Secretary and former U.S. Ambassador to Indonesia Paul Wolfowitz, along with other key Bush administration officials, urged closer relations with Southeast Asian militaries, which they felt were crucial to battling local insurgents and, potentially, combating China. The administration views Asia as a potentially more serious military flash point than Europe—a point emphasized in the most recent Pentagon Quadrennial Defense Review, which pushed U.S. military strategy to focus on Asia and called for deploying more troops in the western Pacific—and considers Southeast Asian armies, especially in Indonesia, Singapore, and Thailand, important allies.

Since the September 11 attacks, advocates of engaging Southeast Asia's militaries have gained the upper hand, White House officials say. For one thing, terrorists have become extremely active in Southeast Asia over the past two years, frightening administration policymakers into action. On Christmas Eve 2000, 20 bombs exploded outside Christian churches in Jakarta and five other Indonesian cities. In December 2001, Singapore arrested 13 men and charged them with plotting to blow up the U.S. Embassy in Singapore. Then, in June 2002, Indonesian authorities arrested Islamic cleric Omar Al Faruq, who said he was an Al Qaeda recruiter sent to plan large-scale attacks against U.S. interests across the region. As a result, whereas Southeast Asian officials used to downplay the threat of militancy in the region, they have now begun to acknowledge it. "Southeast Asia is at the front line in the war against terrorism," Singapore's Deputy Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong admitted in October 2002. Most shocking, in that same month, terrorists blew up a disco in Bali, Indonesia, killing nearly 200 people. According to one Bush administration official, the Bali disaster put Southeast Asia on the map as a hot spot requiring a tough response, including military intervention.

Washington has already moved in that direction. Since fall 2001, the United States has provided the Philippines with more than \$90 million in military aid, including roughly 1,300 American troops, compared with less than \$2 million annually before that period. (The United States withdrew forces from the Philippines, its former colony, in the early '90s.) The American deployment, which included contingents of Special Forces, were sent to train soldiers in the southern Philippines, home to Islamic militant groups such as the Abu Sayyaf. The Pentagon also has equipped the Philippine military with new surveillance technology and other weaponry, while the U.S. Navy has started flying secret P-3 reconnaissance missions over the southern Philippines.

And it's not just the Philippines. Congress cut off military-to-military links with Indonesia after Jakarta's soldiers allegedly abetted massacres of at least 1,000 people in East Timor in 1999. Yet, over the past year, Pentagon officials have resumed high-level meetings with their Indonesian counterparts: former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Peter Brookes traveled to Jakarta last spring for a two-day U.S.-Indonesia Security Dialogue. The Pentagon has also restored

Indonesia's ability to buy nonlethal U.S. military equipment. Meanwhile, last summer, the White House pushed the Senate Appropriations Committee to allow Indonesian soldiers to return to training at the International Military and Education Training program in the United States, from which they had been banned since 1991. The White House has also persuaded Congress to approve a \$50 million package of military and police aid for Indonesia, and Washington has stepped up joint military training exercises with Singapore and Thailand.

U.S. MILITARY AID has led to several minor successes. Most notably, the Philippine army has destroyed some of the Abu Sayyaf's bases and captured some top leaders—"victories" that Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo celebrated in September by posing for a Philippine magazine cover as a terrorist-busting "Woman in Black," dressed in a black suit and dark shades like those worn by Will Smith in the alien-busting film.

Yet these victories have been small and pyrrhic. The Abu Sayyaf has reorganized elsewhere in the southern Philippines. Its members have been linked to a string of recent bombings, and some Manila malls have been forced to adopt Israel-like security measures: I had my bag checked three times last fall before I was allowed to enter and order fried chicken at a KFC. Just last week, a bomb placed at a market in the southern Philippines killed at least six people and injured 30 others. Meanwhile, Indonesian terrorist groups such as Jemaah Islamiah continue to operate with impunity, and southern Thailand has recently been rocked by a string of small explosions.

What's more, there is little evidence that U.S. assistance is changing the Southeast Asian militaries' dismal records on human rights, as its advocates maintain. John Gershman, an expert on Southeast Asian armies at the think tank Foreign Policy in Focus, argues that during the cold war the Pentagon provided aid to the Indonesian and Philippine militaries but that no studies ever demonstrated a consequent boost in respect for civil liberties. Today, in fact, the region's militaries are backsliding in the war on terrorism, undermining the rule of law by attacking even legitimate opposition groups as "terrorists." In the words of Dana Dillon, a former U.S. Army officer in the region, Southeast Asia's forces appear unable to "separate the fans in the stands from the players on the field"—to differentiate between nonviolent opponents and terrorists. In Malaysia, army and security forces have cracked down on the nonviolent opposition, Parti Islam SeMalaysia. According to Human Rights Watch, the Indonesian army continues to torture and murder civilians in the separatist-minded province of Aceh, where more than 1,300 people were reportedly killed in 2002.

Aiding these Southeast Asian militaries will only transfer local grievances toward the armies' scorched-earth tactics to their American patron. As Gershman notes, U.S. assistance for brutal Latin American militaries during the cold war created a generation of Latin Americans who blindly sided with opponents of the United States. Indeed, many moderate

Muslim Thai and Filipinos—the very people Washington needs to cultivate—have told me that they viewed the United States less favorably than they had in the late '90s. Explaining why, they cited the Pentagon's role in Southeast Asian conflicts. "The armed forces of the Philippines, [which are backed by the United States] doesn't know the difference between Muslim political groups and terrorists," one Muslim professor at the University of the Philippines told me. "They kill them both."

Worst of all, Southeast Asia's armed forces—the groups the United States hopes will destroy Islamist terrorism in the region—are actually riddled with Islamic radicals themselves. Over the past decade, members of the Indonesian military helped create Laskar Jihad and several other Islamist militant groups, using them to foment conflict in the archipelago—conflict that would then justify the military's own intervention. In 2000, the military allegedly allowed thousands of armed Laskar Jihad members to infiltrate the Moluccas, a region of Indonesia wracked by Christian-Muslim conflict, where the group murdered hundreds of civilians. According to recent reports by the International Crisis Group, elements of the Indonesian army retain ties to Islamists. Some Indonesian politicians have even started questioning whether rogue army units may have been involved in the Bali bombing, and American officials are increasingly convinced that members of the Indonesian army were responsible for the August murder of two American schoolteachers in eastern Indonesia. "What guarantee is there that any assistance we send to Indonesia wouldn't fall into the hands of Islamists or that the assistance wouldn't give the message that we condone the backdoor ties to Islamists?" asks one skeptical Bush administration official.

The same is true in the Philippines, where members of the military have allegedly kept the Abu Sayyaf alive in exchange for cash or because certain members sympathize with the militants' cause. In June 2001, Philippine soldiers had the Abu Sayyaf's leaders surrounded in a building in the southern town of Lamitan. "But, when the army prepared to hit the Abu Sayyaf, some members of the military radioed Abu Sayyaf leaders and told them when the attack was going to come," Jose Torres Jr., a Filipino journalist who was in Lamitan at the time and heard the army's radio broadcasts, told me. "The Abu Sayyaf escaped town." Other journalists who were at the scene confirmed Torres's story.

SOME AMERICAN OFFICIALS realize that fostering military ties is a recipe for bad publicity and, ultimately, Southeast Asian hostility toward Washington. They also realize other routes could work better. "Thai and Philippine and Singaporean intelligence have made inroads into tracking down Islamist militants," one American law enforcement expert based in Bangkok told me. By funding intelligence and civilian police, he said, Washington would be more likely to help round up Al Qaeda-linked groups without fostering a backlash. Indeed, counterterrorism experts in the region credit intelligence agencies and police for the December 2001 dragnet in Singapore, when the authorities arrested the 13 men plotting

to blow up the U.S. Embassy; the arrest of the cleric Al Faruq in Indonesia; and, perhaps most important, the 1995 bust of associates of World Trade Center bomber Ramzi Yousef. Yousef and his pals had planned a September 11-scale attack on numerous civilian airlines over the Pacific. None of these arrests prompted the kind of public anti-U.S. demonstrations that U.S. aid for the Philippine military has.

But Washington has placed little emphasis on aiding Southeast Asian civilian and diplomatic authorities. Along with a \$50 million Indonesia aid package—which for the first time since the 1999 ban earmarks money for the military—the Bush administration has indicated its support for the army and its intention to send more, says one Indonesia specialist. Indeed, after the aid package was announced, an official at the Indonesian Embassy in Washington said the decision "is the beginning of a long process. ... [W]e are happy about it." Similarly, during a joint appearance in May with Southeast Asian officials, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld told reporters he was a "great believer" in military-to-military relationships and that he was hopeful about U.S.-Indonesia military ties.

U.S. policy toward other Southeast Asian countries is little better. This week, the Pentagon announced that it is considering sending another batch of troops to the Philippines this month for jungle combat patrols, but it has made no mention of aiding the Philippine police or intelligence service. Washington has done little to foster economic growth in Southeast Asia, refusing to lower tariffs on crucial exports, such as tuna, from Indonesia and the Philippines. Meanwhile, American law enforcement specialists based in Bangkok complain that their efforts at promoting intelligence-sharing lack funding, and Washington has done little to encourage a regional summit on terrorism, an idea proposed by Australia. Which means that Thailand's immigration bureau will likely remain swamped in paper for years to come. ■

The NRA v. national security.

Easy Shot

By ELI KINTISCH

RECENTLY I VISITED Potomac Arms, a gun shop on the Potomac River in Alexandria, Virginia. Making my way past the samurai swords and shotguns, I found the 17-inch Anzio Iron-works .50-caliber "take-down" rifle—named because it can be disassembled in less than 25 seconds—on display. Another brand of .50-caliber, an ArmaLite, was available in the back, a clerk told me. Buying either gun would not be difficult: Under the Brady Bill, I'd need to

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show identification, after which my name would be run through a computer to check my criminal and immigration status. With a clean record, I could pay and take the gun with me— with no permanent state or federal record of the sale required.

Many types of firearms can be purchased that easily in the United States. Few of them, however, would be as dangerous in the hands of terrorists. A .50-caliber sniper rifle, experts say, would be more than capable of shooting down an airliner as it took off or landed. Indeed, aimed properly, this weapon could be as effective as a shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missile, such as the one used by terrorists in an unsuccessful attack on an Israeli passenger plane in Kenya in November. But, whereas anti-aircraft missiles are highly restricted for civilians in the United States and decidedly difficult to obtain illegally, high-caliber guns like the one I saw in Alexandria are available at your local gun shop, at gun shows, or even on the Web. They're also relatively affordable: Security officials estimate that a shoulder-launched missile like the one used in Mombasa would cost up to \$5,000 on the black market, with more sophisticated models going for as much as \$10,000. A .50-caliber rifle, by contrast, sells for as little as \$1,250 at Potomac Arms in Alexandria. Incendiary rounds, which ignite on impact, cost roughly \$2 apiece and are also essentially unregulated.

While a .50-caliber rifle is heavy, and would need to be positioned in line with a plane's path, it has the twin benefits of being accurate from more than a mile away and of doing a great deal of damage on impact. "Any hunting rifle is dangerous to an airplane, but a fifty-caliber would be much more effective," says Ken Cooper, a firearms expert who trains law enforcement and security officials in Kingston, New York. Gal Luft, a former lieutenant colonel in the Israeli army and co-director of the Washington-based Institute for the Analysis of Global Security, calls the .50-caliber "lethal against slow-moving planes." Both experts agree that a plane taking off would be most vulnerable to the guns.

When I left the gun store, I drove for ten minutes to a parking lot outside Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport with a clear line of sight to a dozen or so planes waiting at the terminal. I watched a plane scarcely more than 500 feet away from me take off and pass right overhead, exposing the undersides of its giant wings, where the fuel is stored, for several seconds. Cooper notes that, since .50-caliber rifles with ammo clips are semiautomatic, "the fifty can continuously fire and get off a large number of shots . . . even at an airplane going over a hundred miles per hour." Unlike a terrorist, I, of course, hadn't bought a .50-caliber rifle at the store a few miles away.

FIFTY-CALIBER SNIPER rifles are a relatively new weapon, dating back to the 1980s. In World War II, the Browning machine gun, still popular today, fired .50-caliber bullets at a high rate of speed but with little accuracy. Equipped with telescopic sight, the modern .50-caliber rifle shoots bullets, one at a time, with equal power and vastly higher accuracy.

Up to five feet long and weighing between 30 and 60 pounds, the gun fires six-inch-long, half-inch-wide bullets that can rip through a 3.5-inch manhole from 200 yards away. In addition to incendiary bullets, armor-piercing rounds are commercially available. During the Gulf war, American soldiers used these to penetrate Iraqi armor from as far as a half-mile away, doing so much long-range damage against one armored personnel carrier that Iraqi troops in the vicinity immediately surrendered. Fifty-caliber rounds can penetrate armored limousines, airport fuel tanks, and, presumably, the presidential helicopter, Marine One. "This threat is not a gun-control issue but a national security issue," writes the Washington-based Violence Policy Center (VPC) in a soon-to-be-released study on airport security and the .50-caliber rifle.

The military acknowledges the gun's specific threat to planes. As pointed out in the VPC report, several U.S. Army manuals warn against the risk of small-arms fire—such as that from a .50-caliber gun—against low-flying aircraft, citing heavy losses from ground fire in Korea and Vietnam. And experts say airliners' large sizes means they would be easier for snipers to hit and destroy than smaller, fast-flying planes. Airplanes waiting on the runway are also vulnerable. A 1995 report done for the Air Force by the Rand Corporation found that .50-caliber guns give "light forces a portable and quite deadly option against parked aircraft." In the November 2001 issue of *Airman*, the Air Force's official magazine, an article on anti-sniper efforts described planes parked on a fully protected U.S. airbase to be as vulnerable as "ducks on a pond" because .50-caliber guns could shoot from beyond most airbase perimeters.

Manufacturers, eager for military contracts, have actually used the gun's effectiveness against aircraft as a selling point. Tennessee-based Barrett Firearms Manufacturing, whose 82A1 model is popular with armies around the world, as well as with some enthusiasts, has claimed in marketing material meant for the military that the guns are "capable of destroying multi-million-dollar aircraft with a single hit delivered to a vital area." In the 1999 federal trial of six men accused of a 1997 assassination attempt on Fidel Castro, Ronnie Barrett, the designer of the .50-caliber rifle and president of Barrett Firearms, testified to his gun's usefulness against commercial planes as they flew toward a sniper's nest. Asked what he deemed the difficulty of hitting a landing airplane with a .50-caliber rifle, he replied, "Just like bird-hunting."

RIGHT NOW, .50-caliber guns are subject to the same lax federal regulations as hunting shotguns or smaller-target rifles. In most states, the purchaser needs only to have a driver's license, be at least 18 years old, and have a clean criminal and immigration record. Fifty-caliber ammunition, like any other kind of ammo for legal guns, is also widely available: Congress has put limits on armor-penetrating ammunition for handguns, but no limits exist for any but the most lethal .50-caliber ammo. A number of Internet sites offer incendiary and armor-piercing bullets

through the mail, and a 1999 General Accounting Office investigation found dealers around the country who would sell the ammunition over the telephone, even to buyers who asked about the bullets' effectiveness against ballistic glass or armored limos.

Part of the reason is that, while .50-caliber rifles were developed more than 15 years ago, their use has been limited to a small cadre of shooting enthusiasts who use the gun for long-distance target shooting or hunting. But the guns are gaining in popularity. Accurate numbers of the guns manufactured in the United States are hard to come by, but *Forbes* magazine says two dozen manufacturers now make the weapon, and gun magazines have in recent years reported on the burgeoning area of sales to military, police, and civilian markets.

In 1999, after VPC released a report on the gun's increasing popularity, Congress examined the issue for the first time. Since that year, California Democratic Representative Henry Waxman and a handful of other Hill liberals have held hearings and introduced legislation on the guns, calling for .50-caliber rifles to be regulated under the National Firearms Act. That law requires citizens to pay a licensing tax, undergo an extensive check, and wait 90 days to buy machine guns and other kinds of military weapons. This legislation never even received a committee hearing in the Republican-controlled House.

The National Rifle Association's (NRA) arguments against restricting these guns are less than persuasive. "They're used for target shooting," said Chuck Michel, attorney for the California Rifle and Pistol Association, Inc. (CRPA), the NRA's official state association in California. The NRA also claimed, in an August 28, 2001, fact sheet, that ".50 caliber rifles are not used in crimes," ignoring cases of use by IRA snipers, drug runners, and cult members. In addition, they argued that the cost and size of these weapons make them unappealing for ordinary buyers, despite the gun's growing popularity

among, well, ordinary individual buyers. "[T]hey're way too expensive and cumbersome for run-of-the-mill lowlifes," the fact sheet said.

Despite the flimsiness of its arguments, the NRA has successfully blocked the regulation of .50-caliber weapons on the state level. In February 2002, California Assemblyman Paul Koretz introduced a bill to regulate the weapons as assault rifles, and, given California's past success in passing other gun-control legislation, the measure seemed likely to pass. But the CRPA joined with an NRA lobbyist, local gun groups, and Barrett himself to oppose the bill, which died in committee. (One gun-control advocate suggested that pressure to kill the bill also came from California Governor Gray Davis, who didn't want a controversial bill on his desk as he ran for reelection.) Measures that would tighten regulations on .50-caliber guns have similarly gone nowhere in the Illinois and New York legislatures, though the city council in Los Angeles and the Maryland legislature have successfully controlled or banned .50-caliber guns.

Ultimately, though, state regulation wouldn't accomplish much. (A committed terrorist would presumably be willing to drive across state lines to make his purchase.) And action on the federal level has thus far been close to nil. A year ago, in a response to Waxman's concerns about the powerful gun's use in terrorism, the Bush administration implicitly acknowledged the need to control these weapons. In a letter to Secretary of State Colin Powell sent just over one year ago, Waxman wrote that State Department officials had told his staff that the administration had halted export of the weapons overseas, aiming to keep the rifles out of the hands of foreign terrorists. But, in what Waxman calls a "clear backtrack," State said in a subsequent letter to the representative that its action was not a permanent "change in policy." That's too bad. It would have been nice to think the administration cared more about America's security than about the gun lobby. ■

Who will control Iraq's oil?

Over a Barrel

By JOHN B. JUDIS

THE PREFERRED SLOGAN of those opposed to war with Iraq is "No blood for oil"—an explicit assumption that the Bush administration, dominated by former oilmen, is going to war primarily to secure Iraq's copious reserves for U.S. oil companies. "Regime change" to a pro-U.S. government would permit the privatization of Iraq's state-controlled oil resources—and a bonanza for U.S. oil companies," warns Miriam Pemberton of Washington's left-wing Institute for

Policy Studies. Administration officials, on the other hand, reject any oil connection whatsoever. When asked, on CBS radio, whether the likely war is over oil, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld replied, "It just isn't. There are certain things like that, myths that are floating around. I'm glad you asked. It has nothing to do with oil, literally nothing to do with oil."

Both views are half right. On the one hand, there is little evidence that the administration has designed its foreign

policy to enrich Chevron or Exxon. If the Bush administration were gearing its foreign policy to the wishes of the oil industry, in fact, it would have taken an almost exactly opposite course. (Since the Gulf war, U.S. oil companies, eager to exploit Iraqi resources, have lobbied that U.S. sanctions on Saddam Hussein be reduced or even lifted.) On the other hand, even if oil played little or no role in the administration's war plans, it looms large in the restructuring of a post-Saddam Iraq. By my count—based on interviews with White House officials—at least three studies or administration reports have already been issued on this subject, and at least two others have been published by think tanks with close ties to the administration. The State Department has begun a Future of Iraq project, which, during the week before Christmas, hosted a two-day meeting of Iraqi-born oil and gas experts to discuss the country's energy future.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, debate within the administration over how to deal with oil in post-Saddam Iraq is essentially a continuation of the struggle between the Iraq "doves" and the Iraq "hawks." On one side are Secretary of State Colin Powell, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the country's foreign policy establishment, and career officials in State and the Pentagon; on the other side are Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, the Pentagon's Defense Policy Board (chaired by Richard Perle), Undersecretary of State John Bolton, the neoconservative political appointees sprinkled through the administration, and the conservative press and think tanks. The dovish argument is essentially that, once Saddam is taken care of—and with him, the threat of a nuclear Iraq—the nation's oil should be used as a stabilizing force in the Middle East to reassure Iraq's neighbors that America's war with Saddam was just that, and not the beginning of an imperial effort in the Middle East. The hawkish argument is essentially the converse: that Iraqi oil resources should be used to remake the Middle East in our democratic, capitalist image by leveraging expanded Iraqi oil production to undermine Saudi dominance in the region and, perhaps, to destroy OPEC itself.

THE POWELL POSITION has been spelled out in three reports: a Pentagon study, an interagency study, and a recent study, "Guiding Principles for U.S. Post-Conflict Policy in Iraq," produced jointly by the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) and the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy in Houston. When I asked a State Department official about Iraq and oil, I was advised to interview the Baker Institute's Amy Jaffe, who was responsible for the section of the CFR/Baker report that concerned oil policy. According to Jaffe, who has worked with the administration's National Intelligence Council project on energy geopolitics, "A large preponderance of people in State, the NSC [National Security Council], and Defense agree with the contents of the report."

The CFR/Baker study tries to address what could go wrong as well as right after a successful invasion. It assumes

that, as the dust and sand clear from the war against Saddam, American occupying forces in Iraq will find themselves surrounded by Arab states suspicious of U.S. motives; an Iraqi middle class that, while grateful for being liberated, is jealous of its national prerogatives; and, perhaps, a small group of Iraqis bent on retaliation against U.S. interests. To ward off a counterreaction, the study says, the United States must do everything it can to refute the idea that the war was motivated by "an American wish to 'steal' or at least control Iraqi oil. . . . [A]ny efforts to secure Iraq's oil installations and its future production must be clearly and credibly presented as actions taken to protect the country's wealth on behalf of all segments of the Iraqi population." Echoing this approach, one of the administration reports warns that "the U.S. and its partners should make it clear that there are no hidden agendas regarding control of Iraqi oil."

The CFR/Baker study recommends that, wherever feasible, the United States adopt multilateral approaches to managing the transition and that it also involve the Iraqi professional class. The Pentagon report (which has not been made public) similarly urges that the United States should rely on "a multinational force, as opposed to the United States." The CFR/Baker study specifically recommends that after the conflict is over "Iraqi professionals will be able to undertake normal Iraqi oil operations with continued oversight by the United Nations. The continuation of the U.N.'s oil-for-food program structure will assist in building a resource distribution mechanism with minimal corruption and transparent prioritization in the allocation of oil revenues." The Iraqis, the report says, "have the capability to manage the future direction of their oil industry. A heavy American hand will only convince them, and the rest of the world, that the operation against Iraq was undertaken for imperialist, rather than disarmament, reasons."

The report is agnostic about what economic structure Iraq will adopt to manage its own resources, but it holds open the possibility that the Iraqis will insist on maintaining state ownership and control over the country's resources. The report cites the experience of Kuwait, which, after being liberated by the United States and its coalition partners in 1991, hired foreign firms to rebuild its infrastructure but consistently rejected foreign investment in its oil industry. "Iraqi nationalists," the report says, "could pursue a variation on the Kuwaiti approach." At the State Department, Powell reportedly favors keeping oil in Iraqi government hands in order to keep the country intact under centralized authority.

The CFR/Baker study also holds open the possibility that Iraq will remain within OPEC. "As a founding member of OPEC," the report states, "Iraq will experience a strong historical pull to remain within the organization. As important . . . is the fact that producing outside of an OPEC quota will not necessarily bring increased resources." In effect, the CFR/Baker approach and interagency studies endorse a Saddam-less version of the status quo ante. Iraq would still be run from Baghdad by its professional classes, who are dominated by the minority Sunni Muslims. Iraq, Iran, and Saudi Arabia would joust for dominance within OPEC, but

the Saudis, with their larger reserve capacity, would continue to hold the upper hand.

The CFR/Baker study takes a cautious view of Iraqi oil production in the months and years following Saddam's fall. While the nation's oil reserves are estimated to be second only to those of Saudi Arabia, its production has been dropping since 1979. It is now producing 2.6 to 2.8 million barrels per day (bpd) compared with 3.5 million bpd on the eve of Desert Storm. To get back to 3.5 million bpd, the CFR/Baker study estimates that it will take between 18 months and three years and cost \$8 billion—plus \$20 billion to restore Iraq's pre-1990 electrical capacity. To reach an ultimate target of six million bpd (compared with about eight million bpd for Saudi Arabia) "is geologically possible but would take a number of years and tens of billions of dollars in investment."

Instead of seeing oil as the solution to Iraq's reconstruction, the CFR/Baker study sees the oil industry as another part of the country that will have to be rebuilt, largely with foreign funds. Iraq's oil, Jaffe says, "is a problem that has to be managed instead of a benefit." Accordingly, the report doesn't envisage Iraq becoming a capitalist model for the Middle East anytime soon. Iraq could as easily become an urban and industrial renewal project that will depend, in the interim, on aid and advice from its neighbors and the United States.

THE POSITION TAKEN by the CFR/Baker study and embraced by Powell and the Joint Chiefs could be described as conventionally conservative. It is focused on removing the military threat from Saddam but, beyond that, sees merely incremental change in the region after his ouster. By contrast, the neoconservatives inside and outside the administration take a radical, even revolutionary, view of what is possible and desirable in the region; they see turmoil as inevitable and desirable. Says one senior administration official, "Upheaval is on its way. We might as well get in front of it." They see Saddam's ouster not just as a means of preventing a future nuclear threat but of remaking the entire region along democratic, free-market lines. One senior official compares the region now to Nazi-occupied Europe during World War II and the post-Saddam Middle East to post-World War II Europe. "After World War II, we thought strategically about what were the key industrial areas of Europe that need to be under Western control to effect a strategic domination of Europe," this official says. "If you start thinking of the Middle East in the same way, Iraq jumps to the front, because it is that nexus of oil, education, geography."

The neoconservatives don't worry about offending potential critics in Iran, Saudi Arabia, or Syria because they think of them as enemies who should eventually be swept aside by the installation of a democratic, free-market Iraq on their borders. They reject U.N. or multilateral participation in a post-Saddam transition. Says one senior official, "This is the moment where our ideas will be vindicated, or we can walk away. You can't count on the international community to establish a new democratic or political order. The way it

would work is that the reigning power would distribute power and businesses, and which people it chooses to deal with are automatically made into kings. Do we want to be the kingmaker, or do we want to default that over to the U.N.? I am not sure we want to cede it. I would bet the U.N. would seek the acquiescence of Iraq's neighbors—all of which have vested interests. There are three that would be problematic: Riyadh, Tehran, and Damascus. And the U.N. would work through them."

According to reporter Jamie Dettmer, writing in *Insight* magazine, neoconservative Elliott Abrams, who was recently elevated to senior director for Near East and North African Affairs on the NSC, authored a proposal last month calling for U.S., rather than U.N., management and control of the oil fields after Saddam's ouster. When I called the NSC to ask about the proposal, press aide Mike Anton denied its existence. But a neoconservative administration official confirmed that Abrams had made such a proposal and that it was along the lines that Dettmer had described. "Abrams and people at DOD [Department of Defense] seem to be sympathetic toward the U.S. doing it alone," he said.

Neoconservatives also want to bypass the Iraqi National



Oil Company in favor of a free-market approach to oil. The State Department, one neoconservative official laments, "wants the Sunnis to remain in power, and they need access to resources through the state. The Shiites and others would like to see more breakdown of the state and competitive enterprises." Kim Holmes, who recently became assistant secretary of state for International Organization Affairs, commissioned a proposal for Iraqi oil privatization earlier this year when he was director of international studies at the Heritage Foundation. The study, produced by Ariel Cohen and Gerald O'Driscoll, has been well-received among administration neoconservatives. "The Bush administration," Cohen and O'Driscoll argue, "should provide leadership and guidance for the future Iraqi government to undertake fundamental structural economic reform. This process should include a massive, orderly, and transparent privatization of state-owned enterprises, especially the restructuring and privatization of the oil sector."

The neoconservatives aren't looking to enhance Chevron's profits. They support privatization on ideological grounds—they favor investment by new Iraqi companies as much as by U.S. oil companies. "We need to support indigenous [private] groups," says one energy consultant who works closely with administration neoconservatives. They also see the privatization of Iraqi oil as setting in motion a chain of events that could transform the Middle East. If Iraq privatized its oil resources, it would inevitably leave OPEC, which requires each member country to strictly regulate their output and oil exports. And, if Iraq left OPEC, that would mean that two of the world's largest oil producers (Russia is the other) would be outside of the cartel, fundamentally undermining its ability to regulate world output and prices. That would probably mean lower oil prices, but, more important to the neoconservatives, it would undermine Saudi Arabia's economic and political clout and perhaps endanger the Saudi regime itself. Says one senior official, "I don't think an upheaval or splitting apart of Saudi Arabia would be the worst thing. I don't see a graceful exit for them. ... I would expect them to align with Syria and Iran and Libya to bleed us in Iraq. They may become a real enemy in five years. I don't think we can get more mileage out of this relationship." This official said he was speaking for himself, but other neoconservatives, including Wolfowitz, share a similar outlook. They see the fall of OPEC and of the Saudi regime as a desirable outcome of a U.S. ouster of Saddam.

This imagined chain of events—beginning with Saddam's ouster and concluding with the transition to a democratic, free-market Mideast—is based in part on an optimistic assessment of how quickly Iraq's oil industry can be revived and how much oil it can eventually deliver. Says one official, "If we are going to be making a stand in the Arab world of reconstruction and establish a new political order, Iraq is a good place to start because it has the resources to fuel a reconstruction. It doesn't need the vast amount of aid. That is one big advantage of oil." Administration officials directed me to Paul Michael Whibey, a Washington energy expert who used to work in the Washington office of a conservative

Israeli think tank, the Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies (IASPS) but who has now formed his own consulting business in Northern Virginia.

Whibey argues for an Iraqi oil boom. "In the post-Saddam Iraq, I think we will see very significant additional volumes from Iraq. Iraq probably has oil reserves equal to or surpassing that of Saudi Arabia," he says. Whibey, who directed an IASPS project on African oil, argues that production from Russia and from West Africa, which he compares to the Persian Gulf in its early days, could dramatically reduce U.S. dependence on Saudi oil and speed the demise of OPEC. In such a scenario, says Whibey, "We don't get much oil [from the Saudis]. We don't need military bases in places like Saudi Arabia. We have to redefine our strategic interests." From Whibey's perspective, and those of the neoconservatives, it is not merely desirable for the United States to break with the Saudi regime; it is possible to do so without jeopardizing America's current or future oil supplies.

WHICH COURSE THE United States takes with regard to post-Saddam Iraqi oil will in large part be dictated by what happens during the war, should it take place. If the United States goes to war without U.N. support and if the Saudis prove uncooperative during and after the war, it will reinforce the neoconservative argument for cutting the United Nations and Riyadh out of Iraq's postwar reconstruction. But the most likely turn of events is that the United States wins the support, however grudging, of both the United Nations and of the Saudis. (Just this week, French President Jacques Chirac signaled to French soldiers that they soon would likely find themselves at war.) That will give the upper hand to those who favor a U.N. role in supervising Iraq's oil industry and who see the Saudis as an ally rather than an adversary.

Powell's doves will enjoy another advantage in the contest to shape post-Saddam reconstruction: Their assessment of Iraq's oil prospects and of Saudi reserves is probably more accurate. Edward Morse, a former energy official at the State Department and now the executive adviser at Hess Energy Trading Company, calls the neoconservative estimates "wildly optimistic." Similarly, most experts believe that oil from Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf will continue to loom large in world energy calculations. In a recent study, Anthony Cordesman from the Center for Strategic and International Studies estimates that Saudi Arabia has 25 to 30 percent of proven global oil reserves—compared with only 4.6 percent for Russia and 10.8 percent for Iraq. In other words, even if the United States does control the oil in a post-Saddam Iraq, it will not necessarily free us of our dependence on Riyadh.

There can be little question that the neoconservative hawks have played a decisive role in supplying the rationale for invasion. But, in the end, as with the diplomatic buildup to war, it is likely that when it comes to determining the contours of a post-Saddam Iraq, the doves will come out on top. When oil is involved it is realists, not radical idealists, who usually carry the day. ■

Stanley Kauffmann on Films Meaner Streets

AT LAST. FOR thirty years the film world has known that Martin Scorsese, busy though he has otherwise been, was nursing a particular ambition. Now, after much wrangling topped by last-minute disputes with his producer about the film's length, here is **Gangs of New York** (Miramax). The 168-minute result is complex and unusual, and that comment is of course a hint that the picture is troubling.

It is based on Herbert Asbury's book *The Gangs of New York*, which itself presents a problem. The book (published in 1928) is an account of the horrifying gang wars that raged on the Lower East Side of Manhattan in the early nineteenth century; it is neither a novel nor a cursive history, but a collection of violent episodes. All that the book provides, in a large sense, is locale. Scorsese was presented with settings and then had to supply a story to fill them.

The settings themselves were realized by Dante Ferretti, the exceptional Italian artist who designed four films for Fellini and at least three for Scorsese (including *The Age of Innocence*). For financial reasons, *Gangs of New York* was made at Cinecittà in Rome, and there Ferretti created a rabbit-warren New York of the period. The film begins in a large dilapidated building called the Old Brewery, high-roofed with several tiers of ramshackle rooms. When we leave this gloomy interior for the snowy streets, space only emphasizes the closure we have just left, a closure that is like a visual refrain throughout. The costumes by Sandy Powell, costumer of *Miss Julie* and *Shakespeare in Love*, manage to be colorful and expressive yet still look like clothes, not costumes. Michael Ballhaus, the cinematographer, is a master.

But the initial and final requirement was the story, which was supplied by a longtime Scorsese associate, Jay Cocks. He wrote the screenplay, which was later revised by Steven Zaillian and Kenneth Lonergan. Cocks, clearly responding to the nineteenth-century ambience and the size

of the feelings necessary within it, produced a narrative that smacks of Victor Hugo, a melodrama rooted in the ethics and the prejudices of the day. The base of the story is a phenomenon of American immigration, possible only in a new country that was, to crowded and harassed Europeans, bounteous opportunity. A calendar of social stature was soon established. Those immigrants who arrived early looked down on those who arrived later. In this film the Anglo-Saxon Protestants whose families had come to America during the previous century despise and assail the Irish Catholics who begin to pour in during the 1830s. The conflict between the groups was not sheerly religious: it was as if the earlier arrivals claimed territory on which later immigrants were intruding.

Cocks's story starts in 1846 with a furious street battle between an Irish-immigrant horde tired of being bullied and an "American" horde who hate them. The Irish are led by a man called Priest who is or is not one. The fight is a frenzy of stabbings and chopplings, no firearms. Priest is killed by the Protestant leader, Bill the Butcher, and his eleven-year-old son is whisked away to a reform school. Sixteen years later, the son, called Amsterdam, returns to this downtown area, hatching revenge for his father's death. He is incognito and, in a nice Oedipal furbelow, becomes almost a foster son to Bill, who killed his father.

We can almost sense Hugo out there in the spirit world, itching to get his hands on this tale of social injustice and blood and delayed retribution. But Hugo, though hardly a streamlined writer, would have kept the tale more consistently dramatic, would have wound it tighter, and would have explained why Amsterdam's close friend betrays his identity to Bill. (And Hugo would have made the romantic interludes more germane, less like interludes.) Most importantly, he would have had a purpose.

The flaw that separates Scorsese's film into its components is its lack of a crystallized theme. At the end there are some utterances claiming that these street

struggles led the way to democracy, but these closing comments are hollow. They suggest that Scorsese and his writers belatedly realized that they had to supply a reason for their picture's existence. Possibly to aid these thin pronouncements, the screenplay sanitizes the Draft Riots of 1863, which conclude the picture. Mobs of Irish immigrants rampaged through the streets of New York, incensed by the new Conscription Act, which would send them off to fight in the Civil War to free black people: black men would take the Irishmen's jobs while they were away, possibly to be killed for the sake of those black men. Writes Asbury: "Eighteen Negroes were hanged by the rioters, and about seventy others were reported missing." In the film, all that we see of this catastrophe is a black man being ordered out of a Catholic church and two other black men being murdered. The grim facts are tempered to let these riots, along with the white street battles, become somehow the creators of democracy.

This dimness of point, of theme, leaves us wondering why Scorsese had longed for years to make *Gangs of New York*. The only apparent answer is that it gave him a chance to enlarge *Mean Streets*, his film of 1973 that burrowed into criminality in the Manhattan neighborhood where he had grown up. In *Gangs of New York* he could do it in the same neighborhood, in costume. Although Scorsese has made films in which violence is minor, it is hardly libel to say that most of the time he needs blood to touch him off; and viewers are grateful for this affinity with violence because the Scorsese career is rich. And in this new film he could treat violent material in quasi-operatic style, in the streets of his boyhood a hundred years earlier.

As usual with Scorsese, the picture exults in intrinsic luxuriance. Patently his films are the work of a man who lives in cinema as a bird lives in the sky. He has invested himself with the history of the art in a way that empowers him without making him an imitator. For instance, the overhead shot near the beginning, with the two hordes facing each other, is a reminder of Kurosawa's *Yojimbo*—but with a glow of accrual, not mimicry. More: the violence is set in the credible context of the city around it. The life in the streets is choreography that moves out of a director's patterns into dailiness.

Far beyond that, Scorsese is deft with his principals. As Amsterdam, Leonardo DiCaprio concentrates on the role, not on DiCaprio, and gives it body. Cameron Diaz

is perhaps too lovely for a tough pick-pocket who is one of Bill's mistresses and becomes Amsterdam's as well, but she too is focused on her role. The structure of the film's performance, however, is built on Bill the Butcher. His is the role we are meant to remember, and Daniel Day-Lewis—with a glass eye, an extravagant moustache, and the granddaddy of all flat American accents—ensures that we will. Bill, smiling, shrewd, ruthless, is a gang emperor who knows that he is larger than life, resplendent in immorality, inflated with the rhetoric of self-dramatization. Day-Lewis, with intelligence and appetite, searches out every exploitable nook in the man. The hero of the picture is Amsterdam, but, as a good Iago can do with a merely adequate Othello, Bill takes over the show.

DiCaprio also plays the lead in Steven Spielberg's **Catch Me If You Can** (Dream-

Works). The screenplay comes from the autobiography of Frank W. Abagnale Jr., a skilled impostor who, before he was twenty, worked as a doctor, a lawyer, and a co-pilot for a major airline. The story as presented is less credible than the facts: we don't see enough of the way Abagnale bamboozled experts in each field. But DiCaprio has the breeze and aplomb to keep it all bouncing along.

Factual films about impostors are not new—remember Tony Curtis as Ferdinand Demara Jr. in *The Great Impostor*—but they are always scary and funny. Three elements here are especially notable. Tom Hanks transforms himself into a workaday FBI agent simply through an act of creative imagination. Christopher Walken, as Abagnale's con-man father, flusters even further those who think him a monochrome actor. And Spielberg directs so fluently that it takes a while to perceive how well made the film is. ■

her actors with sufficient surgical tools to penetrate the outer skins of their characters. From their first appearance on stage, smoking cigarettes while posing back-to-back in identical checked suits, it is clear that something essential has been lost in translation to the theater.

Like previous Hellman impersonators—Zoe Caldwell, Elaine Stritch, Linda Lavin—Kurtz is wearing a teased bouffant wig (Hellman's trademark, along with her chain smoking and her Blackglama mink), while Jones sports McCarthy's patented dark-lady bangs. But missing from Kurtz's confident strut and theatrical poise are the fake apologies that always preceded Hellman's vituperative monologues. ("Forgive me, but ..." she would say before annihilating some poor shlub.) Nor is there any sense of how she became more acid and bitter as she grew more blind and feeble. Similarly, one can detect little of McCarthy's feral bite under Jones's charming smile. (Mary shared that toothy grin with her actor brother Kevin.)

More serious, despite generous citations from the literary works of both women, Ephron gives us a minimal sense of their style or intellect. Lillian has anger, Mary has honesty. Lillian is a liar, Mary is a bitch. Lillian is a Stalinist, Mary is a Trotskyite. They first meet at Sarah Lawrence College. Many years later, Mary famously questions Lillian's veracity on *The Dick Cavett Show* ("Everything she writes is a lie, including 'and' and 'the'"). Lillian sues, but dies before she can collect damages. Mary dies soon after. End of story.

What fill the interstices between these skeletal events is essentially three kinds of stuffing: perfunctory Broadway show numbers, literary name-dropping, and unconvincing psycho-history. When we go to New Orleans to witness scenes from Hellman's childhood (drawn from her memoir *An Unfinished Woman*), we tap our feet to the "Bay Street Rag," performed by a quartet of ragtime singers and dancers. When we travel to Seattle to empathize with Mary's orphaned past (drawn from her *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood*), the nostalgic period music is interrupted for scenes of family abuse. Childhood events are presented as the psychological keys to the whole course of the women's later lives, perhaps even as explanations of their later quarrels. Mary's uncle beats her brother over the presumed theft of a Cracker Jack toy, thus inflicting psychic harm on his sister. Lillian is so distressed when she overhears her father making love to a woman that

Robert Brustein on Theater Clever Ladies

NORA EPHRON, a clever lady writer, has used a famous dispute between two other clever lady writers, Lillian Hellman and Mary McCarthy, as the basis for an exercise in female war games called **Imaginary Friends** (Ethel Barrymore Theater). Staged by Jack O'Brien, who gave us *Hairspray*, and featuring songs by Marvin Hamlisch, who gave us *A Chorus Line*, *Imaginary Friends* must have seemed like a surefire Broadway biopic about artistic rivalry—a kind of contemporary *Vincent or Amadeus*, studied with song and dance. But a lot more than high jinks and high kicks are needed to explain why these two women found themselves locked in such an implacable public display of hair-pulling.

In her witty and touching novel *Heartburn*, Ephron wrote about the pain of an adulterous marriage from the perspective of personal experience. Here she is reconstructing a notorious literary scrap mostly on the basis of hearsay and homework,

letting her research do the work of her imagination. Stuffed in the program is a "Lillian Hellman and Mary McCarthy Timeline," which sketches the key events in the lives of the two heroines. The play merely recapitulates those events without theatricalizing them, substituting externalized history for thematic coherence or character insight. This makes *Imaginary Friends* a pastiche of imagined dialogues and selected quotations from two literary women who have written about themselves far more cogently than the playwright who has conjured them on stage, and without resorting to gratuitous musical and choreographic routines.

I knew both these women in the last decades of their lives, Lillian better than Mary. Ephron's characters bear no more than a surface resemblance to the originals. The same is true of the women who play them, though this is hardly the fault of Swoosie Kurtz (Lillian) or Cherry Jones (Mary), both extremely gifted performers. The playwright has simply not provided

she falls out of a tree and onto her nose. (What actually drops from the tree is a life-size puppet, an inappropriate Bunraku device that is overused throughout the production.)

Soon we are whisked to a New York café, where, to the tune of a number called "A Smoke, A Drink, and You" (sung and danced by barkeeps), we are introduced to the local literati. "The usual, Mr. Hammett?" queries a bartender, pointing toward Dash's drunken relationship with Lillian. Edmund Wilson pops by to give us a taste of his abusive marriage to Mary. Another former McCarthy lover, Philip Rahv—whose portrayer employs a comic Russian accent that bears no resemblance to the critic's incoherent growl (Saul Bellow likened him to "a frog on a log")—is overheard dropping the names of Marx, Freud, and Einstein. The rest of the lock-step parade follows—James T. Farrell, Stephen Spender, Harold Taylor, John Dos Passos, Norman Mailer, and Gore Vidal, among others, all identified in the same desultory manner as movie stars at the Academy Awards. Meanwhile the play keeps circling around the same key events, the same liar/bitch charges, and finally climaxes with the identification of "Julia," the wartime heroine whom Lillian claims to have helped in her heroics (Anne Pitoniak in a quiet cameo)—a psychoanalyst who never met Hellman in her life. Following a damp coda during which Mary and Lillian reflect on how they might have been real rather than imagined (by Ephron) friends, they kiss, hug, and pass into the soggy Broadway night.

The fact is that these women could never have been close friends, because one, despite some stylistic memoirs, was essentially a middlebrow playwright, while the other, despite some mandarin fiction, was essentially a highbrow critic. These cultural differences were reinforced by profound political and personal differences. Mary was beautiful; Lillian only thought she was. Lillian, despite her distaste for feminism, became an American feminist icon; Mary, who spent much of her life abroad, was relatively unappreciated beyond a small intellectual circle. Lillian never quite threw off her belief that the Soviet Union represented the future of human society, while Mary knew it to be one of the greatest tyrannies in human history. In one respect, however, they were alike. Neither would have appreciated the dumb way their essentially divergent lives have been forced into symbiosis on the commercial stage.

Elaine May is not just another clever lady—she is an extremely witty one who

also has a play running in New York. It is called **Adult Entertainment** (Variety Arts), and, until it loses its steam toward the end of the first act, this satiric reply to *Boogie Nights* is a genuinely funny show. May's conceit is to imagine a resident movie company formed out of a bunch of porn stars and fluffers and directed by a graduate of the Yale Drama School. Gerry DiMarco (Brandon Demery) will oversee the artistic development of these sexual contortionists by exposing them to the highlights of dramatic literature. And the company will save production money "by only working with each other and not having to get tested every two weeks."

These performers—veterans of such epics as *Between Her Legs* and *Saving Ryan's Privates* and *Hanna Bell Licked Her* (say that one aloud)—include Frosty Moons, played by May's daughter Jeannie Berlin in a narcotic daze; Heidi the Ho, the voluptuous hostess of a public-access porn talk show, played by Linda Halaska; Guy Akens, the brother of a recently dead director of erotic movies, played by Danny Aiello in a deadpan glowering rage; Vixen Fox, who has had an artistic breakthrough as a result of her "willingness to go anal," played by Mary Birdsong; and Jimbo J, the generously endowed star of *Jumbo*, recently nominated for Best Group and Best Anal, played by Eric Elice with a coral necklace and a perpetual erection. Gerry gives the cast daily assignments in Marlowe, Wilder, Flaubert, and Yeats ("Don't read Harold Bloom or Wittgenstein until I tell you," he warns), hoping to make them act like artists in "a Merchant and Ivory porn movie." Before long, they have assimilated *Our Town* into the working script ("They embrace and blah blah blah until Tina goes down on him") and are dreaming of picking up prizes in Cannes.

What this amounts to is a hilarious *Saturday Night Live* sketch. Unfortunately, May needs to keep the customers seated past the commercials, so she adds a plot about how Jimbo attempts suicide because he can't bear the fact that Emily (in *Our Town*) is dead. Gerry talks Jimbo down from the open window, after which the entire cast, most of them on poppers, pull themselves together to enact the myth of Daedalus in revealing, removable Greek costumes, no doubt in anticipation of winning the Palme d'Or.

Adult Entertainment is written, acted, and directed (by Stanley Donen, the genius responsible for *Singin' in the Rain*) with style and verve. Still, it is disappointing that a tasty fifteen-minute canapé about the artistic pretensions of porn stars has been bloated into a ninety-minute

meal about show-biz kids getting the curtain up against all odds.

Finally, not a play by or about a clever woman, but an opera about a tragic one. **Sophie's Choice**, which I saw in London at the gorgeously renovated Covent Garden Opera House, is an adaptation of William Styron's novel by the English composer Nicholas Maw, who wrote both music and libretto. The opera, which lasts four hours, is part Berg singspiel, part Puccini bel canto, plus a little Schoenberg atonality. Yet it is more faithful to the eloquent texture of the book than the Alan Pakula movie starring Meryl Streep. This is a tribute to Maw's music and libretto, to Simon Rattle's meticulous conducting, and to Trevor Nunn, the director, who—putting aside his Broadway musical revivals and overproduced Shakespeares for a moment—has delivered one of the most discreet and powerful productions of his career.

A good deal of the success is visual. The act curtain is decorated with a jagged white diagonal line suggestive of barbed wire. When that curtain rises, to the accompaniment of subdued harmonic chords, we see some highly dimensional photographic projections of Brooklyn in 1947, after which set pieces, also characterized by diagonal lines, are trolleyed back and forth on stage. The entire design is reminiscent of Daniel Libeskind's architecture for the Jewish Museum in Berlin.

Maw has elected to split Styron's alter ego, the neophyte Southern novelist Stingo, into two characters—one a young innocent involved in the story (the tenor Gordon Gietz), the other an older narrator (the baritone Dale Duesing) who has already suffered its consequences. From a structural point of view, this device is economical. But the omnipresent narrator, as played by Duesing, is a bit too visible for my taste, and he suffers too much in plain sight, bending into a question mark of pain every time the story takes a tragic turn.

But the beautiful Angelika Kirchschlager's Sophie is an extremely textured and moving characterization, alternating between masochism and tenderness, deception and revelation; while the schizophrenic Nathan is a cross between genius and madman, serving at turns as Sophie's savior and as her executioner. In the performance of the baritone Rodney Gilfry (looking like Jeff Bridges after a few weeks at the health club), the bipolar Nathan also functions both as Stingo's mentor and as his nemesis, embracing him as a friend and renouncing him as a

racist redneck, praising his assimilation of Faulkner while predicting that the next great American literary tradition will be dominated by Jews.

Unfortunately, Nathan's own Jewish identity is not always convincing. He calls Sophie a tease, "more than a little yenta from Brooklyn" (the yentas I know are more prone to gossip than teasing). He exclaims "*Oy vay, vot a mishagos*," sounding less like a Jew than like a Gentile parodying Yiddish. And he climaxes the first act with a long, irrelevant, and easily cuttable monologue (which must have sounded funnier when Philip Roth first told it to Styron in the 1970s) about how Ginsberg blackballed Tannenbaum's

application to his golf club.

But the opera, like the book, is not primarily about Jews or their suffering, despite being partially set in a Nazi concentration camp. It is about the fate of that substantial, if smaller, group of Slavs, Gypsies, and homosexuals who also lost their lives in the Holocaust. And it is about the kind of sacrifices that some of them, like Sophie, were required to make in order to survive.

The opera also reinforces the idea that Sophie's death at the hands of Nathan is partly in penance for that survival, for finding a way to live, however insufferable, that so many millions were denied. The scenes between Sophie and Rudolph Höss

(Jorma Silvasti) are particularly poignant in that regard, as Sophie tries to seduce the commandant of Auschwitz into saving her son. And the monstrous choice that the Mengele-like doctor (Alan Opie) forces on her (the event is underscored by ominous trombones and growling percussion) harrows one with fear and wonder.

In the concluding moments, before turning upstage into the darkness, the narrator asks a familiar question: "At Auschwitz, tell me, where was God?" His next, more cogent question is: "Where was man?" As if in reply, a single sustained violin note is completed by the same harmonic chords with which the opera began, as the lights slowly fade. ■

America's twisted love affair with sociopathic cars.

Axle of Evil

By GREGG EASTERBROOK

I.

LAST FALL'S SNIPER attacks in Montgomery County, Maryland, created gridlock outside public schools, as many parents responded by driving their children each morning. Sitting in the paralyzed traffic around my children's middle school during that period, intersections in three directions blocked by queues of metal, I beheld what modern transportation trends have wrought. At least half the machines jockeying for position at the drop-off point were some form of "sport utility vehicle" (SUV)—a clear mirror of buying trends, since SUVs and deceptively named "light" pickup trucks now represent half of new-vehicle sales. Many of the SUVs were huge, twice the size of regular four-door cars. Drivers of the SUVs were usually the aggressive ones, trying to barge to the front and cut off the cars of people who were, after all, the parents of their kids' friends at school.

What I observed, facing the tonnage of automotive sheet metal lined up outside Cabin John Middle School in this suburban haven, represented twenty years of public-policy fiasco. Perverse federal regulations have actually encouraged auto companies to make SUVs big and wasteful, creating the very emblem of contemporary selfishness. Special congressional exemptions permit the vehicles to emit far more smog-forming pollutants and greenhouse gases than regular cars. Safety

loopholes allow SUVs to be more dangerous than regular cars: it is a common fallacy that the occupants inside SUVs are safer than they would be in ordinary cars, and these Godzillas are instruments of death for non-SUV-driving motorists. Advertising has created the illusion that owning an SUV has something to do with being outdoorsy and adventurous, yet hardly any of these vehicles are used off-road, and the kind of four-wheel-drive systems that many sport to maintain the off-road fiction are nearly worthless in

HIGH AND MIGHTY:
SUVs—THE WORLD'S MOST
DANGEROUS VEHICLES AND
HOW THEY GOT THAT WAY
by Keith Bradsher
(PublicAffairs, 468 pp., \$28)

normal driving conditions, and even in snow. Still other perverse special favors have allowed SUVs to have blackout windows, mammoth grill guards, dazzling headlights, and other features designed to make the vehicles as aggressive and hostile as possible.

To top off the scandal, the petroleum-waste trends caused by the SUV and its cousin, the light pickup (which is also exempt from most safety and environmental rules for regular cars, though millions of supposedly commercial-purpose pickups are used as cars), keep American

society perilously dependent on Persian Gulf oil, diverting \$20 billion annually to Saudi Arabia and its anti-American extremists, and \$10 billion annually to Saddam Hussein himself. Stuck in the school-bound traffic, I marveled at the absurdity of our national situation. The country was preparing to make war with Saddam partly over his oil, and here was a parade of SUVs brazenly attesting to the rarely discussed fact that American gasoline stations are Saddam's financial benefactor. Every time an SUV or light pickup leaves the showroom in the United States, fanatics smile in the Persian Gulf.

BUT IT WAS not the public-policy fiasco of the SUV that was on my mind that morning so much as the existential fiasco of the SUV. These vehicles have converted driving from a convenience and sometimes a pleasure into a nerve-wracking Darwinian battle. Justified as a response to road rage, SUVs and light pickups are actually the root cause of it. Can it be a coincidence that road rage started to become a national concern in the mid-1990s, just as these pharaonic contraptions began flooding the roads? Can it be a coincidence that road rage gets worse annually, pretty much in sync with the annual rise in the percentage of vehicles that are SUVs or pickups? These machines are designed to bring out the worst in their owners while simultaneously making them feel that they are invincible. And they simply take up space,

shrinking the road and parking acreage and increasing all forms of congestion. Traffic studies show that the typical SUV occupies as much road and parking space as 1.4 regular cars.

Driving in America has long been leaned on as a metaphor for various aspects of the national psyche. Now, thanks to SUVs and light pickups, driving is a metaphor for anxiety-inducing unpleasantness, petty aggression against neighbors, and profanity-shouting and finger-flipping during routine daily events. The SUV represents a pitiable equation of a listless activity—sitting in a chair and pressing a pedal—with virility. Why don't the automakers in Detroit realize that they are cooking their own goose with SUVs? Detroit has spent the years of SUV mania promoting vehicles that cause roads to become clogged and driving to become insufferable. Surely this cannot be in the long-term interest of car manufacturers.

Watching my suburban neighbors in the SUV gridlock, I had two other thoughts. I reminded myself that I know congenial and kind-hearted people who own these monstrosities. Some bought SUVs because they were tricked into believing that they are safer than regular cars or provide better traction—or because most of the media, addicted to car-advertising revenue, discreetly avoid reporting on how SUVs kill. Other kindly SUV owners simply went along with a fad. Lots of nice people have fallen for the SUV, one reason that it has become ubiquitous.

I also reflected that of all the causes taken up by well-educated people of the middle and upper middle classes—the same demographic that gave money to Al Gore and voted for him decisively in the last presidential election—the scandal of the SUV is not on the list. SUV buyers are disproportionately prosperous and well-educated, since most SUVs cost more than regular cars. Well-educated and prosperous people seem to have no complaints about SUVs because they believe that the fad benefits them: perhaps because they think that SUVs make them safer, or perhaps because SUVs satisfy some deep private need. Maybe some of these fine people privately long to bellow at the world to get out of their way.

Keith Bradsher covers much of this ground in his dazzling book, a history of the SUV and the public-policy disaster that swirls around it. The former Detroit bureau chief of *The New York Times*, Bradsher writes with knowledge and confidence. His book is a masterpiece of its kind, splendidly combining reporting,

analysis, and indignation. It belongs on the same shelf as Ralph Nader's *Unsafe at Any Speed* and Ida Tarbell's *The History of Standard Oil*, chronicles of the dangerous interaction of corporate perfidy and regulatory breakdown. *High and Mighty* tells us more than we may care to know about how government malfunctions, and about the more disturbing aspects of the American cult of driving.

II.

AMERICANS HAVE ALWAYS loved large cars—well, almost always, and this brings us to the birth of the SUV. Following the oil crunch in 1973, gasoline was much more expensive in real-dollar terms than it is today, and Congress imposed fuel-economy standards on passenger vehicles. These factors combined with Detroit's severe quality-control problems of the 1970s and the advent of high-quality Toyotas, Hondas, and Datsuns to make smaller cars fashionable during the late 1970s and early 1980s. Buyers were abandoning land yachts for nimble small or mid-size vehicles. Detroit needed a new large-vehicle product to help reverse its declining market share.

At about the same time, the old American Motors company was making a push to market its Jeep brand as a vehicle for everyone, not just for backwoodsmen. The company was in financial trouble. Bradsher reports that its lobbyists told officials of Richard Nixon's newly created Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that if the company went under, they would blame the anti-pollution rules of the newly passed Clean Air Act. So the EPA wrote a waiver that essentially exempted Jeeps from anti-smog regulation, on the grounds that they were not cars but "light trucks." That trucks should get a pass on clean-air rules was itself something of an absurdity. Ostensibly the provision was to protect business, but since the deadweight cost of pollution control is the same from the standpoint of the economy regardless of whether the price is imposed on individuals or on businesses, the distinction never made much sense. In any event, Jeeps were issued a free pass.

You can guess what followed. Other manufacturers demanded free passes for anything even vaguely truckish, including light pickups. Automakers rushed to create a new class of large vehicles with obscure design elements (such as the option of ordering a model with panel sides instead of rear side windows) that allowed manufacturers to claim that they

were trucks, even if they were plainly intended for use as cars. To this day, every SUV and light pickup sold in the United States is allowed to emit substantially more smog-forming pollutants than regular cars. Dramatic action against this problem was supposedly taken during the Clinton administration—but the dramatic action in question was to extend the free pass to the year 2009, when SUVs finally, at least in theory, must meet anti-pollution standards.

ALL THE DECENT people who buy SUVs in the conviction that they are safe or chic should recognize that their vehicles are pollution-spewing hogs. Regular cars, for which anti-pollution controls are extremely strict, get cleaner every year, so much so that smog should be declining rapidly in most cities. But smog decline has slowed in the last decade, and the reason is the SUV. The Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, for example, was expected ten years ago to be off the EPA smog-problem list by now because the trend in pollution from regular cars was sharply down; but so many smog-emitting SUVs have invaded the area, bringing their anti-pollution exemptions with them, that in the last few years the quality of local air has actually declined.

This decline is not because it is impossible to build a clean-running engine that delivers enough power for a large vehicle. The big engines of some modern full-size cars, such as certain Cadillacs, run with hardly any smog emissions. The 240-horsepower V-6 engine of my family's Honda Odyssey minivan, built in Alabama, generates enough power to move an SUV, but it emits barely measurable pollutants, less than 10 percent of the amount allowed by the standard for regular cars, which is already quite strict. SUV and light pickup engines that could meet anti-pollution rules would be wholly practical. It is just that they are not required, so Detroit does not build them; and Congress, which is in Detroit's pocket, keeps putting off the day when the requirement will kick in.

To strengthen its argument that the first SUV versions of Jeeps were really trucks—even though the company was loading them with luxury features for marketing as personal cars—American Motors pointed to the Jeep's truck-like undercarriage and to its purported ability to operate off-road. Eventually a federal bureaucrat decreed that an SUV with air conditioning, leather seats, and other suburban amenities becomes a truck if it is "capable of off-highway operation." The

test of this, in turn, became whether the vehicle is tall enough to provide ground clearance. So Detroit made the early SUVs very tall, to be assured of the pollution-control exemption. Height makes SUVs hostile-looking, causes their headlights to dazzle oncoming drivers, makes them block other drivers' view of the road, and renders them more likely to roll over. But it assures the exemption, which was all that mattered.

IN THE 1970s, as the rules of the Clean Air Act took force, federal mileage standards also went into effect. An asterisk in the rules specified that they did not apply to vehicles in excess of 6,000 pounds gross weight (vehicle weight plus maximum load). This asterisk was intended to keep the miles-per-gallon (MPG) rules for regular cars from affecting real trucks, since at the time there were no ordinary vehicles with a gross weight in excess of 6,000 pounds. But early SUV manufacturers realized that if they beefed up the suspensions of their products to reach the 6,000-pound mark, they could evade mileage restrictions. So Detroit deliberately made SUVs heavier and more wasteful. The rules, you see, had been set up to reward waste.

By the 1990s, a federal "fleet" standard (the average of all new models sold by a manufacturer) of 20.7 miles per gallon would be established for SUVs, versus the federal standard of 27.5 miles per gallon for regular cars. But though cars as a group actually meet the federal mileage requirement, the SUV standard remains shot through with loopholes. Manufacturers get exemptions if they declare SUVs "dual fuel," or capable of running on ethanol. Millions of SUVs and pickups are now "dual fuel" for rule-evasion purposes, though almost none actually run on ethanol. (In most states, gas stations do not even sell ethanol.) Federal MPG ratings are also derived from unrealistic tests in which SUVs are daintily accelerated with air conditioners off and never, ever driven above the speed limit—since speeding, as we know, is illegal.

Officially, the Dodge Durango gets 13 miles per gallon in city driving and scores just 1 on the 1-to-10 EPA scale of clean-air performance. The Chevy Avalanche gets 13 miles per gallon in the city and scores 0 on a scale of 10. The Cadillac Escalade gets 12 miles per gallon and hits 0 on a scale of 10. The Chevy Tahoe—owned by Leonardo DiCaprio, who demands that everyone else sacrifice to prevent an artificial greenhouse effect—gets 14 miles per gallon and 0 on a scale of 10 for environmental responsibility. And in actual use

drivers will be lucky to realize even these pathetically low figures.

Low mileage in SUVs and pickups is not dictated by the laws of nature any more than pollution-spewing is. Automotive engineers, including those in Detroit, have accomplished wonders with MPG improvement. Full-sized cars such as the Ford Crown Victoria and Chevy Impala now do well on an MPG basis. The new Impala records 32 MPG on the highway, a number that Toyota and Datsun buyers would have envied in the 1970s. The large Buick Park Avenue gets 20 miles per gallon in the city and earns a 7 on the environmental scale of 10. Detroit knows perfectly well how to build fuel-efficient, low-polluting large vehicles.

Large cars now do well on fuel efficiency because the MPG rules for regular cars are actually enforced, compelling Detroit to comply. But Congress has repeatedly granted special waivers for SUVs: in 1990, in a showdown during which a Senate filibuster was used to block progress, and again in 2002, when a bill to improve SUV and pickup mileage drew only 38 votes in the Senate. (Even many Democrats voted nay.) Just before Christmas, President George W. Bush announced that SUV and light pickup fuel-efficiency standards would rise about 10 percent, to an official

fleet average of 22.2 MPG, by the model year 2007. Ten percent improvement is preferable to inaction, but it is far less than the SUV fuel efficiency gains that the National Research Council recently told the White House would be practical using current technology. Also, the administration's decision leaves the "dual fuel" gimmick in place, meaning that many SUVs and pickups will simply evade the new standard.

WHY SUCH RESISTANCE to improving fuel efficiency for SUVs? Since SUVs and light pickups are now Detroit's most profitable products—owing to their popularity, they command price premiums and sell at considerable mark-ups—an unholy alliance of conservatives who oppose federal energy-efficiency rules and Democrats from United Automobile Workers (UAW) states consistently blocks legislative attempts to do nothing more radical than require SUVs and pickups to meet the same standards as regular cars. Detroit does need profit; and, as Bradsher writes, SUV revenues "have contributed to the economic revival of the upper Midwest." But SUVs would still be profitable if they were fuel-efficient, clean, and safe: and all three of those qualities

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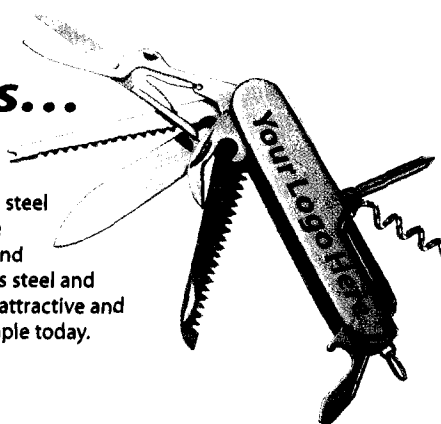
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are technologically attainable. The only vehicle type that would be put out of existence by meaningfully higher mileage standards would be the ultra-offensive Excursion, Tahoe, and Hummer class of leviathan SUVs, the existence of which represents a classic "public nuisance" in legal terms anyway.

Freed from meaningful mileage regulation, designers of SUVs and pickups have concentrated all engine-technology advances on power and acceleration. The result is enormous SUVs that go from 0 to 60 miles per hour in 8.5 seconds, which is the rate at which sleek sports cars accelerated a generation ago. (Despite cultural nostalgia for the muscle cars of the 1960s, all categories of automobile are now faster than they used to be: average acceleration has increased about 10 percent per decade since 1970, and the added speed is one reason that roads grow ever more hectic.) SUV drivers certainly do not need excessive acceleration, except to act antisocially. Indeed, excessive acceleration imperils them, because SUVs and pickups are hard to control with the pedal against the floorboard, and when accelerating they are prone to spinning out as a consequence of too much steering input. Porsche is about to begin selling a 450-horsepower SUV that goes from 0 to 60 in 5.6 seconds, which is racetrack speed. Between this absurd degree of ultra-hostile acceleration and the poor handling and compromised safety inherent to the SUV, Porsche's product is a death sentence for the company's customers. We can soon expect a reduction in the sort of people who buy a Porsche SUV.

Through the 1970s and early 1980s, nascent SUVs won special exemption after special exemption. Regulators ruled that SUV bumpers did not have to be as effective as bumpers on regular cars. Impact standards for driver survival and passenger survival initially were waived, though they have since been enforced. SUVs and pickups were permitted to have much poorer brakes than cars—meaning longer stopping distances—and less durable tires. Designers were not required to lower the height of the headlights on SUVs so that they did not blind oncoming drivers: automakers complained that lowered headlights prevented these vehicles from looking menacing, and regulators caved. SUV manufacturers were given permission to use darkened passenger windows, which are forbidden on regular cars. There is no logic here that I can detect, other than that darkened passenger windows look cinematically ominous and SUV merchants want a monopoly on that look. (Darkened windows do re-

duce the load on air conditioners, but if that is good, why can't regular cars have them?) And SUVs were exempted from stability rules that might have prevented rollovers. Rather than making SUVs stable, manufacturers were required only to place a sticker on the sun visor warning of the vehicle's instability.

PERHAPS MOST IMPORTANT from the marketing standpoint, during a trade war with Japan in the late 1970s SUVs won a special import tariff of 25 percent against their competition. This occurred back when Japan was cleaning Detroit's clock and the UAW was worried. In 1980, as Ted Kennedy campaigned to take the Democratic presidential nomination away from Jimmy Carter, Douglas Fraser, the head of the UAW, played the two off each other to win a 25 percent tariff on imported SUVs and most imported pickups. The tariff on pickups exists to this day, grandfathered into World Trade Organization agreements, while the SUV tariff lasted until two years ago, when it was removed after Detroit achieved market dominance in this category.

The many exemptions, coupled with import protection, made SUVs and light pickups categories that Detroit became extremely eager to promote. During the 1970s and early 1980s, the one period when small cars were most popular with buyers, manufacturers offered SUVs as a way to stand out in the crowd. The Chevrolet Blazer hit the market in 1982, followed by the Ford Bronco in 1983. Shortly afterward the OPEC price-maintenance system collapsed and the cost of gasoline declined. Older people started buying SUVs because they found that the vehicle's height made it easier to get in and out. People who wanted to be different or obstreperous or macho behind the wheel flocked to SUVs. People who once bought station wagons switched to SUVs as manufacturers phased out the wagon, which had no import protection, in favor of the "sport-ute."

Here and there SUVs actually were used by outdoorsy types seeking adventure. But, as Bradsher reports, the leading customers for SUVs—to the surprise of auto marketers—were affluent suburbanites who had no intention of driving anywhere other than freeways and mall parking lots. SUVs sold better in cities than in the countryside. They sold well in New York City, Boston, and Los Angeles. "By the end of the 1990s," Bradsher writes, "SUVs accounted for a quarter of all new vehicle registrations in Manhattan, compared with a little under 17 per-

cent nationwide." Clearly not envisioning weekends of backcountry camping, buyers began loading up SUVs with every possible creature comfort, so much so that factories essentially stopped producing the basic versions you would expect to encounter on rugged trails. And so Americans fell in love with SUVs, pretending that the only reason for this infatuation was their erroneous belief that riding in an SUV keeps you safe.

III.

FOR THE PURPOSES of securing regulatory advantage, the manufacturers of SUVs falsely claim that their products are trucks, but there is one sense in which they really are trucks: most SUVs have been built on truck underbodies. Early models such as the Bronco and the Blazer had tall passenger compartments bolted to pickup truck frames. Bolting SUV bodies onto truck frames saved Detroit research and development money, and stiff, heavy truck frames are indeed what you would want if you were actually taking your SUV off-road. But since almost all buyers use SUVs the way they would use a car—only 1 percent of SUVs are ever driven off-road, Bradsher notes—the truck undercarriage was the beginning of a safety nightmare.

Vehicles on truck frames do not handle well, owing to details of suspension and frame properties. Experienced truck drivers know this, and generally they drive their trucks conservatively. But SUVs and light pickups are marketed to suburbanites who drive them like cars, careening around corners. When driven in this manner, truck-based SUVs and pickups are prone to flip over. Moreover, truck-frame construction deprives a vehicle's occupants of protection. Almost all regular cars now have a "unibody" design, in which the driver and the passengers sit protected by a single-unit metal enclosure that bends but does not break, except in the worst crashes. The body-on-frame construction used in SUVs, by contrast, bends poorly; when something slams into an SUV, the body and the frame may separate, exposing the vehicle's occupants. This is the primary reason that SUVs and pickups can be enormous and surround you with hard, heavy alloy, yet are not necessarily any safer. In federal crash-worthiness tests, SUVs and pickups have consistently done worse than regular cars. The 1997 Chevy Blazer, General Motors Jimmy, and Oldsmobile Bravada all earned one star in such tests, which means that they are death traps; regular

cars rarely get less than three stars. (Air bags have since improved most SUVs' crash ratings; and the first SUV with a car-like undercarriage, the new version of the Ford Explorer, recently did well in crash testing.)

Insurance-company data, Bradsher writes, show that SUVs and light pickups have much higher loss rates than regular cars. That SUV owners generally do not pay higher insurance premiums is a perverse consequence of 1970s-era laws that discouraged insurers from linking auto premiums to vehicle weights. Those laws were enacted when the well-off had glistening new small cars and the poor had old land yachts; in the era of the SUV, they represent a subsidy from the poor to the well-off. Buyers of luxury SUVs may also get tax breaks denied to buyers of regular cars. As the *Detroit News* recently reported, the Internal Revenue Service has been allowing affluent business owners who buy SUVs and classify them as business "trucks"—even if they are actually burlwood-trimmed Cadillacs for personal use—to knock as much as \$25,000 off their taxes through a special depreciation. The special tax break only applies if the SUV weighs more than 6,000 pounds, which represents still another reward for waste.

THE MOST RECENT comprehensive study of SUV performance and safety, published last July by the National Research Council (NRC), an affiliate of the National Academy of Sciences, found that occupant deaths were slightly higher in SUVs as a class than in cars as a class. That's right: in an accident, you and your family are more likely to die if you are riding in an SUV rather than in a car. During last year's Senate debate on blocking SUV mileage standards, Senator Barbara Mikulski of Maryland—a state with SUV component plants—declared that "women love their SUVs ... because of their safety." This is political feminism degraded into a sales pitch for bad cars. There is no gainsaying that women, and others, feel secure in SUVs, but the important fact is that this feeling of security is an illusion.

The NRC study found that large cars such as the Buick Riviera and mid-size models such as the Toyota Camry are notably safer for the people inside them than are SUVs. The study also found that the most dangerous vehicles for their occupants are compact and sub-compact cars ("econo-boxes" such as the Dodge Neon and other small vehicles) and, at the other end of the scale, pickups. In this sense, the study confirmed the popular

belief that econo-boxes are death traps. And so they are: do not buy them and do not let your children ride in them. The study also confirmed the popular belief that large cars are safer than compacts. But safety design, not tonnage, is the significant factor. SUVs weigh far more than full-size and mid-size cars, but the latter are safer for occupants because they are designed in accordance with the strictest safety standards, while SUVs and pickups are not. Minivans are large, but do well on safety ratings: their buyers tend to be safety-conscious because the vehicles are intended to haul children, and so automakers, even in Detroit, have applied to minivans the safety-design emphasis missing from SUVs and pickups.

The NRC's findings have been relentlessly misrepresented by Detroit's lobbyists and by the White House, which seeks to justify inaction on SUV fuel waste at the same time that it may ask American soldiers to die in Iraq in part for the politics of oil. Lobbyists and administration officials have repeatedly stated that the NRC study concluded that if the MPG rules for SUVs were made stricter, 2,000 people would die from weight reduction in future SUV designs. Yet the NRC asserted no inescapable relationship between weight and occupant safety. (Pickup trucks, among the heaviest of vehicles, are also among the most dangerous to drive or to ride in.) What the NRC study really says is that imposition of the original federal fuel-economy rules caused 2,000 avoidable deaths between 1976 and 1993 because the rules led to people buying econo-boxes; and the early econo-boxes had almost no safety engineering. Today advanced safety design allows hefty cars such as the Impala to get excellent mileage per gallon, meaning MPG rules no longer force buyers into econo-boxes, which I would be happy to see taken off the market on safety grounds.

The NRC report is poorly written, and its density seems intended to defy clear understanding. Yet the 2,000-deaths figure applies to the past, not to the future, and its constant misuse by lobbyists and White House officials falls somewhere between misunderstanding and propaganda. What did the NRC actually conclude about the safety implications of future mileage improvements? That mileage increases "could produce additional road casualties," but only under federal rules "as currently structured" (and every specialist advocates better rules), while there would likely be no additional casualties if stricter standards were "specifically targeted at the largest, heaviest"

SUVs and pickups, which is exactly what reformers propose.

WHILE SUVs AND pickups do not keep their occupants any safer, they cause significant and avoidable peril to others on the road. No regulations govern the effect that vehicles have when they hit other vehicles; the rules apply only to people on the inside. In accidents, SUVs and pickups are Charon on wheels. Their weight imparts more energy to the crash. A frame that breaks free of an SUV during an accident becomes an iron guillotine aimed at the other car's passenger compartment. In a front-to-front crash, the high noses of SUVs and pickups tend to ride up over the sloping engine compartments of regular cars, resulting in the SUV sitting atop the car and crushing its occupants. (Some new SUVs incorporate a bar designed to reduce the odds of riding up and crushing. *High and Mighty* doesn't mention this, but Detroit engineers call it the Bradsher Bar, owing to Bradsher's relentless *New York Times* reporting on this particular risk.)

Bradsher's terrific book provides incredible and ominous detail on the risks that SUVs and pickups pose to other drivers, and the extent to which automakers knew the dangers and covered them up. He cites "the best estimates of federal regulators" that the height, the weight, and the design of SUVs and pickups is causing an avoidable 2,000 deaths per year (yes, another 2,000 estimate) in cars struck by the Godzilla machines. Highway deaths declined through the 1980s and early 1990s, even as more people drove greater distances; the decline flattened out in the late 1990s, though advanced safety features such as anti-lock brakes, "crumple zones," and air bags were becoming common, while programs to encourage shoulder-harness use and to discourage drunk driving were notably successful nationwide. Why did the reduction in auto deaths stop while new safety devices came into use and drunk driving declined? The "kill rate" caused by the presence of ever more SUVs on the road was swamping all safety gains. Bradsher cites an engineering study: "When a car strikes another car in the side, the driver of the struck car is 6.6 times as likely to die as the driver of the striking car. But when an SUV hits a car in the side, the death ratio rises to 30 to 1." Bradsher adds that the "kill rate" for pickups is worst of all, "because pickups are more likely to be driven by reckless young men, and because the bulk of pickups on the road are full-sized models

while the bulk of SUVs on the road are still midsized."

A cynic would say that SUV drivers do not care if they kill others in crashes, so long as they survive themselves; and surely some SUV buyers believe that they are making themselves safer and do not give a hoot if someone else suffers. This viewpoint is very prevalent. Bradsher cites an SUV marketing specialist explaining that part of the sell line is, "If there is a crash, I want the other guy to die." During last winter's Senate decision not to impose any new mileage standards on SUVs, Senator Kit Bond of Missouri, whose state is home to an SUV assembly plant, declared that "government should not interfere with the people's right" to choose SUVs and enormous pickups. But since when is there a "right" to imperil others? This is not like a First Amendment situation regarding what you read or think or how you worship, or like a Fourth Amendment situation regarding what you do within the walls of your home. Driving an SUV or a light pickup is a public act that creates avoidable public risk. Suppose I invented a device—say, a security system with an automated arrow launcher—that would make homes slightly safer, with the regrettable side effect that it would occasionally malfunction and kill a passerby. Would Senator Bond say that his next-door neighbors had a "right" to install my invention and point it in his direction? The Founding Fathers would shiver to hear politicians assert a right to cause harm or to act irresponsibly in the public sphere.

SINCE SUVs ACTUALLY imperil their own passengers, cynical buyers who believe that they are adding to their own safety by subtracting from the safety of others are not getting their money's worth. Indeed, considering that most SUVs are expensive, buyers rarely get their money's worth at all. Buyers surely assume, for example, that if SUVs have leather seats and eleven-speaker Bose audio systems, then they must also have good brakes. Actually most SUVs have inferior brake systems with longer stopping distances than regular cars, while many lack "independent suspension," a standard car feature that improves handling. You have read that SUVs are cash cows for automakers, bringing in much higher profits than most regular-car products. Why are SUVs so profitable? Because they sell at premium prices while being in many respects shoddy merchandise.

The Line

The line that through the field
slings its hard arrow, the line
he nudges the way green
clings to riverbanks, the way cities
begin as an idea and end in dust.
The way the morning wind
pulls him into grey light framed
by the factory tint of rivers,
the frayed relations
of migratory birds. The line
that follows the swaybacked skeletons
of power stations, stark, ruminant
agents of monotonous song
and strings his sad intentions
to anonymous gardens where sheets
voice the wind indifferent
as the abandoning clouds.

Stephanos Papadopoulos

A false sense of safety once came to buyers of Ford Explorers with Firestone tires. The notoriously lethal crashes of these vehicles, which led to the biggest recall in auto history and to huge monetary losses for Ford and Bridgestone-Firestone, were ultimately traced to defects in the tires, as Explorers with Goodyear tires experienced no unusual problems. (No unusual problems in this sense means that Explorers with Goodyear tires were extra-dangerous in the standard way: "SUV occupants have long had nearly double the death rate of car occupants in tire-related crashes," Bradsher writes.) And drivers contributed to the problem. Many Explorer-Firestone crashes occurred when drivers were speeding (often driving far above the speed limit) and had overloaded vehicles.

Bradsher's book amply documents what you might expect: the dogged attempts by Ford and Firestone to deny the threat. *High and Mighty* offers a funny-if-it-weren't-sad account of how tire-loading contributed to the Explorer-Firestone problem. One of the many practical jokes about SUVs is that as big and imposing as they appear, they cannot carry much more than regular cars. The maximum safe load for the pre-2002 Explorer was 1,300 pounds, the same limit as for the mid-size Ford Taurus. (It is astonishing how engineers have managed to throw metal at the SUV and yet have come up with vehicles offering few advantages in usable size. The insides of many SUVs are actually cramped! Try to wedge yourself into the backseat of the cost-no-object four-door Range Rover SUV and

you will long for a regular car.) In this golden age of American obesity, four passengers alone can come perilously close to the 1,300-pound maximum safe load. Add lots of stuff and your SUV is over its rated weight, which adds to the risk of tire failure and loss of control.

Most drivers do not even know that there is a safe-load limit that they are not supposed to exceed. To prevent buyers from realizing how readily the Explorer could be packed over its safe weight, Bradsher writes, Ford did not list the safe load anywhere on the vehicle or even in the owner's manual. Instead the maximum gross weight—vehicle and load combined—was stamped inside the doorjamb. This number is completely useless unless you know what the SUV itself weighs. Preposterously, owner's manuals instructed buyers that they were to find some way to weigh the vehicle, then subtract that number from the gross weight to determine safe load. Bradsher spent a day in an Explorer driving around trying to find a truck scale that would weigh his ride; he is surely the only person ever to have done this. The extent to which Ford tried to camouflage this basic safety number was stunning. In the aftermath of the Firestone tire debacle, the company now prominently labels SUVs for safe load, but it remains true that most SUV buyers have no idea that safe-load limits even exist.

THE NOTION THAT four-wheel-drive systems make SUVs safer than regular cars is yet another fallacy. Front-wheel-drive systems are clearly superior to rear-wheel drive for traction, because front-wheel drive places the drive wheels under the vehicle's primary weight, the engine, which is good for stickiness. All that four-wheel drive does is to add rear-wheel power to a front-wheel-drive setup—but it is the rear wheels that are likely to spin in the first place. In off-road use, four-wheel drive is important because there may be times when only one side of the vehicle touches the surface, or when one side is on a hard surface while the other is on a soft surface. In highway driving conditions, four-wheel drive offers no advantages over front-wheel drive. (And in all conditions, four-wheel drive does not increase braking power; all vehicles already have brakes on all four wheels.) Indeed, a front-wheel-drive car with "traction control," which regulates wheel spinout, is likely to hold the road in bad weather better than a four-wheel-drive SUV.

So what does four-wheel drive add to SUVs? In regular use, nothing but weight, cost, and lowered fuel economy. It also creates an artificial sense of protection that may cause SUV owners to drive like maniacs and find out the hard way about four-wheel drive. Last winter my wife and I had to drive across the Cumberland Pass, near the Maryland-West Virginia border, in a snowstorm. The transit was hard and required close attention, but the car, a front-wheel-drive Honda Accord built in Ohio, never skidded. We passed perhaps two dozen vehicles spun out on the shoulders along the expanse of the pass, owners standing nearby swearing and gesturing as they shouted into cell phones. Every one of the spun-out vehicles was an SUV.

WHICH BRINGS US to the rollover. The primary reason SUVs are more dangerous to ride in than cars is that they are far more likely to tumble in this way. "Roughly 1,000 Americans died needlessly in rollovers in 2000 because they were in SUVs instead of cars," Bradsher writes, summing up a large body of research. Needless SUV-rollover deaths are likely to increase, owing to the growing use of SUVs. Buyers who choose enormous SUVs because the metal makes them feel safe are surely thinking that most car crashes are head-to-head collisions, in which metal does favor those in SUVs. Such buyers probably dismiss the chance of a rollover as an extreme rarity. Yet fully one-third of highway deaths occur in rollovers. If this were more widely known, surely people would not be lining up to purchase vehicles that are likely to roll over.

SUVs roll over because their center of gravity is much higher than that of regular cars; and because their tires are often overloaded; and because truck-like steering properties make them harder to control than cars for average drivers who lack truck licenses; and because every time a passenger climbs into an SUV, his or her own body weight, sitting tall off the road, raises the center of gravity that much higher. Since the weight of passengers and luggage raises the SUV's center of gravity, a vehicle that is packed with people is more likely to roll over than a vehicle containing only a driver, making everything still worse. There is even an awful SUV-guardrail interaction. Most guardrails have a standard height that stops cars well but just happens to be perfect for making runaway SUVs flip over and crush their occupants. Half of SUV buyers are now women, and they tell focus groups that they are attracted to the feeling of sitting high off the road. No

one informs them that sitting high off the road makes them more likely to die.

Bradsher's book presents a depressing chronicle of how automakers strove to suppress information about SUV rollover deaths and how eagerly Congress cooperated in the hush-up. Since the dawn of the SUV, members of Congress, prominently including John Dingell of Michigan, have pressed the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) not to test SUVs for rollover likelihood. Another prominent water-carrier for the SUV is Representative Martin Frost of Texas, Nancy Pelosi's recent rival for the position of House minority leader; Frost once favored higher mileage standards for SUVs, but instantly became an apologist when General Motors converted a factory in his district to SUV production. Only after the Explorer-Firestone scandal did Congress instruct NHTSA to investigate SUV rollovers. Since the scandal, NHTSA has published a largely meaningless rollover rating calculated solely from a vehicle's wheelbase and height. Beginning this year, NHTSA will perform actual tests to determine which SUVs roll over and which are stable. Members of Congress from SUV-producing states opposed the actual-conditions tests, apparently worried that voters would find out what the real risks are.

HIGH AND MIGHTY makes still another unsettling point about the safety of SUVs. So far SUVs have been only somewhat more dangerous than cars, Bradsher writes, because they are expensive and tend to be purchased by well-off people between 30 and 50 years old, a cohort with a below-average incident of causing crashes. Soon, as the first generation of monster SUVs gets traded in, these behemoths will begin entering the used-car market, where they will be purchased by immigrants, the lower middle class, and the poor, who generally speed, run lights, drive drunk, and crash more often than the prosperous classes. It is sad but true that the less well-off, and especially immigrants, drive more recklessly than the well-off; and the fines, the points, the raised insurance rates, the revoked licenses, and the greater incidence of crashes are all reasons that they tend to stay less well-off. At any rate, this segment of the population is about to be armed with three-ton SUVs and enormous pickups.

Used SUVs will also end up in the hands of teenage males, who possess the very worst driving records, regardless of social status. The "responsible middle-aged people" who bought the first wave of

SUVs, Bradsher notes, mainly had families and did most of their driving in daylight, when crashes happen less. But the teenagers, the immigrants, the rowdy young guys, and the others who are about to inherit the first wave of SUVs drive at night, when accident rates spike. Today "more than half of the nation's SUVs are less than five years old," meaning that they are in the hands of their original owners. Within a few years, the majority of SUVs will be in the hands of their second or third owners—who, statistics predict, will be more prone to driving these monsters carelessly.

IV.

"THEY TEND TO be people who are insecure and vain. They are frequently nervous about their marriages and uncomfortable about parenthood. They often lack confidence in their driving skills. Above all, they are apt to be self-centered and self-absorbed, with little interest in their neighbors." This is Bradsher's summary of the auto industry's own marketing research about SUV buyers, and he adduces numerous on-the-record comments from auto-marketing gurus to back this up. One such wise man, named Clotaire Rapaille, tells the Big Three that people buy SUVs "because they want to look as menacing as possible." It is perhaps not startling that rather than trying to alter these buyer proclivities, the manufacturers of SUVs have tried to encourage them. There are lots of self-centered and self-absorbed people with little interest in their neighbors. Somebody finally made a class of vehicles designed to bring out the worst in them.

Many SUVs, such as the Durango, have been consciously engineered to look as threatening as possible, with auto companies using focus groups and other techniques documented in *High and Mighty* to determine which features and styling cues suggest an anti-social message and then zeroing in on them. The styling goal for the oversized Dodge Ram megapickup was "a vehicle that would make other motorists want to get out of your way." Cadillac markets the Escalade with photography staged to make it appear to be an armored combat vehicle, over the huge-type sell line YIELD.

Bradsher asserts that Rapaille, who will not drive an SUV himself owing to the danger of rollover, has been an influential force in encouraging Detroit to make SUVs and light pickups heavier and nastier-looking, arguing that selfish modern buyers think they can cut off other drivers more easily in wheels that

seem threatening. Certainly not all large cars are marketed with a hostile message. Minivans, which though also large are far safer, more fuel efficient, and lower-polluting than SUVs and pickups, are marketed with an emphasis on positive values: caring for children, arriving safely, offering rides to the softball game. SUVs and pickups are sold by appealing to belligerence, and what you promote is often what you get.

One hostility-intensification feature is the "grill guard" that SUV manufacturers promote. Grill guards, useful mainly for pushing oryx out of the road in Namibia, have no application under normal driving conditions. But they make SUVs look angrier, especially when viewed through a rearview mirror. (The grotesque new General Motors Hummer H2 offers a cage of steel in front of the grill for an additional \$525.) Grill guards also increase the chance that an SUV will kill someone in an accident. As with so many other aspects of the SUV, the addition of the grill guards is unregulated—though standard cars, for which there are strict bumper rules, are not supposed to have metal grill guards.

IN ADDITION TO marketing hostility, SUV manufacturers assiduously promote the fiction that the true purpose of the SUV is a romantic off-road adventure to the far reaches of nowhere. Just as sports-car manufacturers show their products boldly barreling around the corners of country roads with no other cars anywhere in sight, SUV ads feature these vehicles climbing pristine hillsides, perching atop natural wonders, fording rough and beautiful streams, or racing through magnificent canyons. There is never anybody or anything in the scene except the sovereign SUV, which seems to have all of creation to itself. Often the advertisements are computer-generated productions in which an SUV is digitally spliced into a natural scene because the vehicle is not in fact capable of getting to these farthest reaches of sublimity.

All automakers are guilty of advancing the fiction that SUVs are intended for off-road adventures, but nothing surpasses in romantic deception Ford's "No Boundaries" campaign for the company's Explorer, Expedition, and Excursion SUVs, in which it is suggested that these vehicles are used primarily to support kayaking, Himalayan ascents, and Peruvian anthropology. The earth-crushing Excursion weighs four tons, versus one and a half tons for the typical car. Ford's website gives the length and height of the Excursion down to tenths of an inch, but says

nothing about its weight.

The marketing of SUVs as if they had something to do with the outdoors plainly appeals to aging boomers who fancy themselves adventurous and free-spirited while living tame suburban lives. If the overwhelming majority of traveling boomers never stray far from their hotels, millions still wish to maintain the illusion that they might. Bradsher reports that one of DaimlerChrysler's chief SUV designers convinced the company that what counted was not how SUVs were actually used but "the fantasy of what [the buyer] might want to do during a vacation, and the ability to show friends and other motorists that they really were the bold people they liked to see themselves as." That SUVs are becoming popular with young buyers suggests that the daydream has multi-generational appeal.

THE OUTDOOR-ADVENTURE illusion of SUVs makes these vehicles worse in a nefarious way that relates to their treatment in the media. *High and Mighty* includes an intriguing discussion on the role of the press in auto sales. For consumer items such as soft drinks, studies show that buyers make choices based 90 percent on advertising and promotion ("paid media," in corporate terms) and just 10 percent on what newspapers and magazines say ("free media"). When it comes to cars, by contrast, people tend to read up: studies show that only 20 percent of the buyer's decision is based on promotion, with the rest coming from what buyers read and hear from the "free media." It is reassuring to learn that the power of the press still exists somewhere; but when it comes to SUVs, this power is consistently misused.

The automotive writers in newspapers and the many "buff books"—*Car & Driver*, *Road & Track*, and the rest—tend to review SUVs by focusing on their off-road prowess. Auto writers drive these machines up hills, across boulders, and through deserts, and then analyze the fine points of four-wheel-drive performance. (Bradsher describes a hilarious SUV-introduction junket in which writers were given a succession of washed and polished new Fords to drive like lunatics through a wilderness area, while they were followed everywhere by chefs, wine stewards, and a huge trailer that contained marble bathrooms for the Ford executives.) This form of rating is wildly irrelevant to the actual uses of these vehicles. But in order to be assured of good off-road ratings, General Motors, DaimlerChrysler, and Ford beef up the suspensions, the frame rails, and the horsepower

of their SUV models, rendering them more wasteful and more dangerous in the conditions under which they are actually used.

AUTO WRITERS AND buff books rarely discuss SUV safety or gas mileage, not wanting to upset advertising buyers or alter their own obsequious, handout-based relationship with Detroit. *The Washington Post* recently offered an instance beyond parody. Its auto writer, Warren Brown, penned a love poem to the new General Motors Hummer H2, the most offensive SUV yet devised. Skipping the fact that the Hummer is a leather-lined luxury toy (heated seats, nine Bose speakers) being marketed to affluent suburbanites, Brown deliriously proclaimed that the Hummer is what Jesus would drive. Its size and its profligacy are justified, Brown said, because "if you are a missionary like some of my friends," you could use a Hummer "to bring loads of food and medical supplies" to the poor. But verily I tell you that no car on the road will allow its driver to pass through the eye of a needle less easily than a Hummer.

The SUV's combination of sociopathy and fantasy has reached its preposterous culmination in this vehicle, which is based on the military Humvee, originally designed to carry infantry and machine guns. The Hummer gets ten miles per gallon, meaning that its annual greenhouse-gas emissions triple those of a car, and it weighs nearly three tons. (Still another loophole: if an SUV grows heavy enough, like the Hummer, the manufacturer does not have to report its fuel mileage to the EPA.) Hummers are even longer and higher than standard large SUVs, but *Consumer Guide* recently warned of the vehicle's "limited cargo room" and "cramped" seats, evidence of poor design. (The mid-size Nissan Maxima, which weighs less than half as much as a Hummer, has more front legroom.) The Hummer cannot park without straddling spaces. Its owner would be out of his or her mind to take this \$52,000 bauble off the interstate, though of course the advertising features the usual postcard scenes of the noble outdoors. (In my favorite, a Hummer is racing across a glacier.) Do I need to tell you that Arnold Schwarzenegger persuaded General Motors to offer the civilian Hummer, endorsed it, and purchased the first one? The Hummer screams to the world the words that stand as one of Schwarzenegger's signature achievements as an actor: "Fuck you, asshole!" Maybe this class of vehicles should be called FUVs.

V.

WHAT DOES IT say about the United States that there are now millions of people who want to drive an anti-social automobile? Huge numbers of Americans will pay thousands of dollars extra for vehicles that visually declare, "I have serious psychological problems." (Though maybe we are better off having this declared.) The antagonistic environment of the modern road is linked, of course, to the more general psychological predicament usually called stress. We are all stressed for time or money or achievement or sex, or at least we all view ourselves as being thus stressed; and the road is experienced as both an obstacle to the things that we are in such a hurry to fail to get and an arena for the cathartic release from this strain.

The road also has the advantage of anonymity. Screaming "Fuck you, asshole!" to a neighbor or a colleague might have costs. Screaming it behind dark glass in the fast lane, or symbolically as we roar up behind others or cut them off, is probably not therapeutically useful—my pop-psychology guess is that road rage makes the rager feel worse. But the ethos of the modern road, especially the ever greater number of SUVs and pickups that are intended by their designers to instill hostility, seems to encourage maniacal driving and the pointless taking of offense at the slightest lack of deference on the part of other drivers. On America's highways, calm people are scorned as losers.

The nation's self-sabotaging unofficial moratorium on road-building further contributes to this culture of anger. In the last thirty years, vehicle-miles driven on U.S. roads have increased by 143 percent, while road miles have risen by a mere five percent. The number of miles we drive is a link to our greater prosperity: there are now nearly as many cars in the United States as there are licensed drivers, and almost everyone wants to drive alone, which we all find unreasonable on the part of the other guy but divinely convenient for ourselves.

Some of the miles-driven figure is owed to the combination of government policy and union intransigence that ruined the railroads as freight carriers, leading to the truck deregulation that spawned the tens of thousands of "sweatshops of wheels" that now obstruct highways. Next time you are wedged between two tractor-trailers speeding downhill in the rain, bear in mind that most of what they carry used to move on the now-idle rail lines, while highways were kept free for cars and buses. Truck deregulation (slightly)

holds down consumer prices by (slightly) cutting costs for retailers, but it chokes traffic and it makes highway travel unpleasant; a sensible union compromise to keep goods, and jobs, along the rails would have made far more sense for society as a whole. And if you don't like the weaving, speeding way that many big rigs are driven today, bear in mind that the Bush administration has proposed that the minimum age for a truck license be lowered to eighteen, in order to create even more downward pressure on drivers' wages.

Rising immigration is another factor in declining road civility. Today the United States admits more legal immigrants annually than all other nations in the world combined, and its percentage of foreign-born citizens is the highest it has been since the 1920s. Mainly this is a social good; but if you have ever driven in poor nations, you know that American roads are models of civic decorum compared with much of the rest of the world. In developing nations, traffic moves willy-nilly, while people ignore lights and veer blithely into congested roads. Some immigrants bring such habits here, and since state authorities have in effect decided that a driver's license should go to everyone over sixteen regardless of skill—licenses are now handed out for barely minimal displays of competency—an international bad-driver virus is loose on America's roads.

Consider the changing sociology of the flashing of high beams. Traditionally in the United States, a quick flash of high beams has meant, "You go first." In much of the world—especially in India and Pakistan, the cradle of a large fraction of recent immigrants—flashed high beams mean, "I should rather that I and all my family died a gruesome, meaningless death than yield to you." People in India and Pakistan flash their high beams as a warning that they are about to run a light or are coming the wrong way down a one-lane road. Ten years ago in the Washington area, when you flashed your high beams at someone waiting to make a left turn, the person would make the turn and give you a grateful wave. Now when you do this the other driver does not budge, assuming the flash means that you are accelerating for the purpose of cutting him off.

In some infuriating way, moreover, the SUV and the cellular phone are evil twins. Their proliferation has occurred in tandem, and the conjunction of cell phone use and road rage cannot be overlooked. The man or woman barreling down the road in an SUV while yakking into a cell phone is broadcasting the public-service message

"Get out of my way, because I am paying no attention to what I am doing." Safety advances such as air bags and anti-lock brakes have moderately backfired in this regard, as they engender a false sense of security, making the cell phone-SUV crowd think it can barrel distractedly down the road without risk.

THE DRIVING METAPHOR has long been central to American culture. It always entailed a spiritual aspect: the hunger for autonomy, the need for solitude, the urge for power, the problem of never finding what you are looking for. But in the era of the SUV, the driving metaphor has turned simply nasty, a twisting of freedom into aggression and the unfettered satisfaction of a technologically abetted narcissism. This has terrible consequences. There is the waste of petroleum, which causes us to import too much oil from the Persian Gulf and to remain dependent on the despots in Iraq and Saudi Arabia. There are runaway greenhouse gases, which may or may not cause harm but surely cannot be good. There is the transformation of commuting and chore-running into a big nerve-racking unpleasantness, while spoiling the fun of driving. And there are the needless deaths of our fellow citizens.

That last result of the SUV craze is what should haunt us the most. But where is the general media attention to *High and Mighty*, which ends with reasonable prescriptions for reform? Only auto writers and the "buff" press are paying heed, and only to attack Bradsher's disclosures for jeopardizing their sweetheart relationship with Detroit. Members of Congress, for their part, have so far responded to this extraordinary book as they have responded to the entire issue: by hiding under their desks.

On New Year's Day, the incoming Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist was praised for racing to give emergency aid to victims of a vehicle wreck in Florida. Two children died despite his efforts. What was largely overlooked in the coverage of Frist's heroism was the character of the crash. A tire blew on an SUV and the monstrosity flipped, ending two young lives; tire-caused fatalities are rare among regular cars. Will Frist become an advocate of SUV reform, or will he return to Washington and join his colleagues in the next round of cover-ups and exemptions? Frist has now seen with his own eyes the folly of government's coddling of the SUV: the harm done by leading Americans to believe that these vehicles will protect people. In fact, the doctor-senator has now had their blood on his hands. ■

The Present of the Past

By MICHAEL WALZER

The Ethics of Memory by Avishai Margalit

(Harvard University Press, 227 pp., \$24.95)

MEMORY IS A fashionable subject these days, but much of what is written about it is either sentimental or cynical. It is sentimental when the remembering is made too easy, when its subjects are presented without complication or skepticism—as if we already know everything that we are called upon to remember. The triumphs and the defeats of the past are simplified and trivialized and marketed by the merchants of nostalgia. This is history as kitsch, and one common response is a kind of intellectual cynicism: now our memories are re-described to us as the products of elite and media manipulation—as if we have no knowledge at all about the events we remember. State-of-the-art professors, fervent debunkers, deny us the very possibility of a usable past. Avishai Margalit's book is a wonderfully effective antidote to both the marketing of memory and the "discourse" of memory, a gift to all of us who are engaged by the contemporary arguments and who are radically unhappy about them.

Margalit is an Israeli philosopher and a social critic. He writes here as a philosopher—but not as a philosopher addressing only his professional colleagues. He is a public philosopher, and one of the uses of this book is to display the resources of a good philosophical mind: the analytical skills, the grasp of the relevant example, the patience in argument, the capacity for indirection. It isn't often that these resources are on display in such an accessible book, dealing with a topic so central to its non-professional readers.

The book opens with an important distinction between philosophers who make distinctions and philosophers who use examples: "i.e. philosophers" and "e.g. philosophers." Margalit belongs in both camps, but his sympathy (mine, too) is with the e.g. types. That is, perhaps, the chief reason for the accessibility of his analysis: examples tumble onto his pages, from history and from literature, and many of them will be familiar to the general reader. He doesn't play with hypothet-

ical cases, stripped of time and circumstance for the sake of the argument. At the same time, however, he does argue like an analytic philosopher, and in the end, I think, readers will be grateful for the complexity of his discussion.

The central question is this: are we bound—can we be bound—to remember? Is memory ever an obligation? And a host of other questions follow. Whose obligation could this be? Which "we" is the agent of memory? How is the obligation distributed to individual men and women? What actions does remembering require? What exactly are we called upon to remember? And what is the point or purpose of memory? These questions do not arise in a historical vacuum; they are not academic questions. They have been argued about most vividly in the literature of the Holocaust, especially in Germany (where this book was first presented as a series of lectures), because the problem of memory is posed in the most radical way by the evils that were done by our ancestors, or in our name, or simply in our time—which we might well prefer not to remember.

Examples drawn from the destruction of European Jewry figure prominently in Margalit's book, but he is not writing specifically about the Holocaust. There are now an array of catastrophes that "we" should certainly remember—more, however, than we can ever properly remember, which is one of the difficulties of "the ethics of memory": black slavery, the Armenian genocide, Belgian brutality in the Congo, the murder of the kulaks, the Nanking massacre, the forced prostitution of Asian "comfort women" in World War II, mass murder in Cambodia and Uganda and Rwanda and East Timor and... We can all add to the list, and while there are distinctions to be made among its items, they are by no means easy to make; nor are they likely to affect the answers that we give to the questions about memory. Surely the victims in all these cases should not be forgotten. But what does that mean?

It may seem odd to talk about an obligation to remember, since memory is not,

so to speak, one of our voluntary muscles. But the idea, as Margalit argues, is perfectly comprehensible: we acknowledge an obligation to keep promises, but we cannot do that unless we remember the promises we make, and therefore we are obliged to remember them. That means that we have to make an effort, write down what we are supposed to do, mark the calendar, arrange to be reminded, and so on. Forgetting a promise is not an excuse for not fulfilling it. When communities decide to remember something important about their past, they contrive a "division of mnemonic labor," involving historians and poets, textbook writers, the designers of rituals and memorials, teachers and preachers. Both the division and the labor are commonly contested, and Margalit does not say enough about these contests. They belong to what he calls the "politics," not the "ethics," of memory. I will come back to this point.

ETHICS IS THE central concept of Margalit's book. He defines it by contrast with morality, and this is a contrast that I have to dwell on, since it fixes the "we" who are bound to remember and determines what memories we must cultivate. Ethics shapes and regulates "thick" human relations—the common life of people who share ethnicity, history, culture, or religion, and who have a sense of one another as fellow members. Right now, the nation is the most significant political association, as the family is the most significant private association, within which membership of this sort is possible. The nation is not, Margalit stresses, a necessary association; it is not the only possible container for a common politics. But ethics requires boundaries.

Ethics flourishes within an enclosed social space. Morality, by contrast, is unlimited in its extension. It regulates our "thin" relations, those that do not depend on any familial, historical, or communal fellowship but only on our common humanity. Morality governs the world of strangers; ethics, the world of relatives and compatriots. Margalit's thesis can be summed up in this way: "Morality is long on geography and short on memory. Ethics is typically short on geography and long on memory."

This is a thesis that is bound to make us uncomfortable (but are we morally obligated to be uncomfortable?). Think about crimes against humanity such as those that I listed above. These are crimes, Margalit says, that undermine the foundations of morality; they challenge the "thin" but very important idea that our common humanity requires mutual re-

cognition and respect for life and liberty. Surely it is humanity itself, all of us, who should remember the victims. "What should humanity remember? ... Striking examples of radical evil ... enslavement, deportations of civilian populations, and mass exterminations."

We have to remember these events for the sake of the victims, but also so that future generations will know what men and women are capable of and what we must guard against. Yet humanity is not a "we" with a memory. The sense of an ongoing common life, the ritual enactment of important historical moments, the celebration of heroes and martyrs: all this requires a particular group of people who aim at continuity, who are committed to an indefinite future, and who are eager to define it as best they can by telling their children stories about a shared past. What stories do human beings qua human beings tell about themselves? One might construct a generic story, but there are in fact no actual stories. "Memory," writes Margalit, "is too tied to the [individual or communal] idea of immortality to expect that anonymous humanity can serve as a community of commemoration when it fails miserably as a community of communication." If the crimes of Belgium in the Congo are going to be remembered, it will have to be the Belgians, and the Congolese, who remember them. It takes a community to remember a crime.

IT ALSO TAKES a community to forget a crime. Repressing the memory, wiping out the traces: this, too, is cooperative work and probably easier to accomplish. Hence the need for an ethics of memory: we need the do's and the don'ts. For Margalit, this is a hypothetical ethics rather than a categorical ethics: *if* we want to live in an ethical community, we cannot avoid the pain and the difficulty of collective recollection. Ethical communities are constituted—and, when necessary, reconstituted—by the act of remembering. Lecturing in Frankfurt several years ago, Margalit joined the debate about the Holocaust memorial being planned in Berlin. He argued then (and argues again in this book) that this had to be a specific remembering of the German crime against the Jews—and not, as some memorial designers proposed, against "human beings" in general. "The way for the Germans to re-establish themselves as an ethical community," he remarks, "is to turn their cruelty, which is what tied them to the Jews, into repentance."

That sounds right to me. But what, then, is the point of the Holocaust memorial in Washington? Is it to remember

(and to repent) America's failure to rescue Jews before and during World War II? I suspect that the memorial also makes a more general point, not only about German cruelty and American passivity but also about our common inhumanity—a point that is appropriate to a multi-ethnic country such as ours. And so it gestures toward the construction of humankind as a community of memory, which Margalit believes is both necessary and (for now, at least) highly improbable.

The ethics of memory depends upon the moral witness, to whom Margalit devotes an especially fine and complicated chapter. The witness is the man or the woman who lives through an evil time, suffers and survives, and insists on telling us about it. The poems of Anna Akhmatova, the books of Primo Levi: these (and many other memoirs, stories, and oral histories) are the testimonies of moral witnesses. The witness brings terrible news, but his project is founded on hope that one day, somewhere, sometime, there will be a community of people willing to listen and remember, whether these are the descendants of the victims or the descendants of the perpetrators, or some other group of people who make their own connections to past evils.

But the moral witness requires co-workers, and about these Margalit, as I have already suggested, has too little to say. This is one of those short books that makes the reader wish it were longer. The establishment of memory, the creation of memorials and holidays, is a political project as well as an ethical one. Perhaps we should say that it is driven by an ethical imperative and then subjected to a process of political compromise. People disagree about what ought to be remembered,

about how the past should be fixed in public monuments and the state calendar. Many of us want to remember the Vietnam war as a crime for which Americans should repent; but many others find that memory unpatriotic, even abhorrent. Somehow, through the forbearance of the many (on both sides) and the creativity of a single artist, we have a memorial that expresses neither repentance nor patriotism, that manages to honor the dead without consecrating their cause. I would like to have had Margalit's reflections on achievements of this kind, which we certainly would not accept in the German case.

The politics of memory requires ethical analysis and judgment. Think, for example, of the debates over Civil War memorials and Confederate flags across the American South. Sanford Levinson is the author of an excellent book—*Written in Stone: Public Monuments in Changing Societies*—focusing on these cases, among others, and describing how contemporary political divisions shape and re-shape our common past. Slowly, inexorably, Southern whites are being persuaded or forced to agree that the slave society of the old South cannot be celebrated, as it once was, in memorials and monuments. But this process does not produce simple victories; it produces a succession of compromises. How should we judge the succession? We might think about it as a process through which the memories of black Americans are being integrated into our collective memory. And so, Margalit might say, the United States is being re-established, a century and a half after the Civil War, as an ethical community. *The Ethics of Memory* helps us to understand how difficult such a process is, and why it is necessary. ■

CORRESPONDENCE

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that criticize Saudi Arabia's legal system. To my knowledge, they don't exist. (The professors can only defend their scholarship with a technicality: that I needed to call them to discern the true meaning of their writings.) In fact, the Harvard program goes further than most recipients of Saudi money. Its head, Vogel, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques Adjunct Professor of Islamic Legal Studies, has made a career of publicly apologizing for the Saudis. Faced with evidence of the Saudi system's capricious punishments, lack of due process, and atrocious human rights record, he has resorted to cultural relativism. In 1998, he told the *American Bar Association Journal* that "Shari'a

[Islamic law] is the ideal on which their country was founded. For us to say it reeks of abuse is much like the Communists pointing to unemployment and inflation in our country and saying democracy does not work." His book *Islamic Law and Legal System: Studies of Saudi Arabia* refines and extends this argument, justifying Saudi practices. Does this mean that the Saudi donation has influenced his scholarship? A few years ago, before the current wave of skepticism about the Saudis, Vogel voiced an opinion on the subject. On National Public Radio, in 1993, he said that he saw the Saudi gift as "something very much in the greater good of the Muslim world and particularly of Saudi Arabia." ■

CAMBRIDGE DIARIST

Immature

WARREN CHRISTOPHER wrote last week in *The New York Times* of terrorist attacks “wreaking havoc in far-flung places such as Indonesia, Kenya, Jordan and Yemen.” Maybe I am being myopic, but why didn’t he mention Israel in that list, the state that suffers most from this savagery? Certainly Bill Clinton’s secretary of state wouldn’t be the first prominent American to believe that terror against Israelis is different, not quite so satanic, as terror against other civilians. Palestinian terror, say its apologists, is political—the illegitimate means to a legitimate end, statehood. But many peoples have pursued statehood in modern history, and only the Palestinians have pursued it so barbarically. Terrorism, truth be told, is about the sum total of what the Palestinians have bestowed on our civilization during the last five decades.

THE PALESTINIANS AREN’T SKITTISH about claiming this peculiar gift to the world as their own. Take the double suicide bombing near the old bus station in south Tel Aviv this past Sunday evening. Before all the shattered bodies had been dispatched to hospitals, Islamic Jihad had taken credit for the deed. And, not long after, came word from Hamas that it, too, should share in the kudos. Then, this competition became snarled. The Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, an armed gang of Yasir Arafat’s own Fatah, announced that, no, it had committed the act. And, then, Arafat’s Palestinian Authority (P.A.), itself dominated by Fatah, condemned it. The P.A. boldly promised to act against those responsible. But by now this is an old trick, which only the European Union still seems to believe. The purveyors of murder and the denouncers of murder are the same people. (To make the P.A.’s horror even less credible, authoritative Israeli observers now believe that it was Tanzim, another of Fatah’s militias that actually shed the blood.)

THIS WAS NOT THE FIRST TIME THESE particular Tel Aviv streets had hosted Palestinian carnage. On Tisha B’Av last

summer, a day of fasting and mourning for the destruction of the First and Second Temples, terror took the lives of five and wounded dozens over the same pavement. There was another bloodletting earlier. This is a poor neighborhood, and many of those present in its alleys and open spaces are foreign workers, the poorest of the poor. A wise Jerusalem friend speculated that the murderers now target foreign workers because they are the ones on whom Israel depends for the work once done by Palestinians from the territories. The Palestinian aim is to make the Filipinos and Romanians, Nigerians and Colombians, Turks and Thai, so scared that they leave. If my friend has divined an intention of the Palestinians, it is a mad intention. The intifada has not only brought current agony to nascent Palestine; it has guaranteed that economic misery will continue far into the future. In the coming months, a wall, urged upon Israel by many of its foolish doves and many of its foolish hawks, separating much of the disputed territories from the Israel-to-be, will be an established fact. When (and if) there is a peace agreement, the borders will not again be open for hundreds of thousands of Palestinian workers to share in the prosperity that will surely return to Israel. The peril of admitting an alien and hating workforce is simply too great. Edmund Burke wrote in his *Letters on a Regicide Peace* (1796), “War never leaves where it found a nation. It is never to be entered upon without mature deliberation.” At what might have been the dawn of a real state, the Palestinians started this macabre war in a fit of delirium. The war has been and will remain, long past the day when agreed rules govern relations between Israel and whatever becomes Palestine, a calamity for their people.

ONE INDEX OF THE IMMATURITY OF Palestine even as a concept is that its elites still turn to neighboring Arab countries to fight their battles for them. (The term “Palestinians” is immature as well. The U.N. Partition Plan of 1947 never called the local Arabs “Palestinians” and neither did the crucial 1967 Security Council Resolution 242). When the Egyptians, Jordanians, and Syrians sent armies to fight in 1948, 1967, and 1973, they were there not on behalf of the Palestinians but on behalf of their ambitions for sovereignty over the lands of what was historically called Palestine. The other Arabs talked a lot about Arab Palestine but did little. They are now doing even less. In real terms, the Palestinians are now on their own, which is why they nourish the fantasy that Saddam Hussein might somehow become their

liberator. (*The Boston Globe* reported just this week on a pro-Saddam march in Nablus.) Egypt is now in a panic that the deteriorating situation of the Palestinians will inflame Cairo’s rent-a-mob populace. So, just as the bombs went off in Tel Aviv, Hosni Mubarak was trying to convene meetings with Fatah, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and two “Marxist” murderous bands (one, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine; the second, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine) aimed at an agreement to stop terror against Israeli civilians within the armistice lines of 1949. Terror outside those armistice lines, of course, would still be perfectly acceptable.

NO NATIONAL MOVEMENT IN MODERN history has been more compromised by collaborators than that of the Palestinians. I know that the Shin Bet and the Mossad and the various legendary Sayerets are smart and brave. But they’re not that smart or that brave. Still, it’s part of the anti-Semitic repertory, and not just among the Arabs, to impute demonic gifts to the Jews. This is the only excuse the Palestinians have to explain (away) the shame of so many of their own being informants for Israel. Yes, there are heroic Palestinians, perhaps many of them. And there certainly are passionate Palestinians, passionate enough to blow up school buses. But, since the Israeli security services seem able to locate particular terrorists—many of them—at particular times and in particular places, the Palestinian nation seems to me not yet a faithful community, not yet faithful to itself beyond family or tribe, class, or degree of Muslim piety. There were, not long ago, hundreds of thousands of Christians among the Palestinians. But Palestine somehow did not truly encompass them, and they were envied, denounced, and persecuted. So, many decamped from their homes to the usual places that take in the unwanted. Western Christians pretended not to notice this abandonment of Palestine by its historic inhabitants. But betrayal is a grisly habit that is not easily contained. The Yishuv (the Jewish community in pre-state Palestine) was divided along ideological lines, and its warring politics were often steeped in bitter history. But, unlike the Palestinians, Jews did not rat on one another, not to the British and not to the Arabs. They did not have a civil war. The Palestinian civil war, by contrast, is yet to come, and it will be vindictive. Like Spain’s. And the society it produces won’t be kind, regardless of how it ends or who wins.

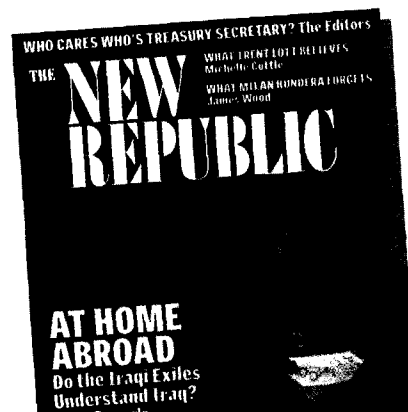
MARTIN PERETZ

2003

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Getting Ahead of the Biowarfare Threat

Bruce Berkowitz is
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(Free Press).

President Bush has approved a plan to inoculate 500,000 U.S. military personnel against smallpox. The president, as commander in chief, will be vaccinated along with the troops. He also plans to make the vaccine available to up to ten million public safety workers.

The White House fears terrorists or rogue states may resort to biowarfare. Developing the policy took months of deliberation. When you consider the issues involved, you can see why.

The smallpox vaccine (like many drugs) has side effects. Historically, the current vaccine has caused about one to two deaths per million recipients. Simple math suggests that this would total between 300 and 600 deaths if the entire American population were vaccinated.

Thus ordering a mass vaccination program is not a trivial decision. But Iraq, North Korea, and several terrorist groups are known to be exploring biological weapons. The United States needs a cadre of people who can respond to an attack.

Smallpox could be an especially gruesome weapon. It is highly contagious and kills about a third of those infected. Those who survive are usually scarred, and many are crippled or blinded. Before a vaccine was invented in 1796, smallpox often killed hundreds of thousands of people each year.

The disease was considered eradicated almost a quarter century ago. Today the only specimens of smallpox virus exist in labs in the United States and Russia—at least, the only *known* specimens.

And that's the problem. We must be prepared for the chance that somehow Iraq, North Korea, or Al

Qaeda has been able either to steal a sample of the virus or found some specimen that managed to escape eradication.

U.S. leaders today must deal with threats that are ambiguous, debatable, hard to verify but that could amass huge costs. Many other biological agents such as anthrax, Ebola, and plague could also be turned into weapons. Furthermore, many chemical, radiological, and nuclear weapons can be developed covertly.

The smallpox decision is the kind of complex national security calculation we can expect more of. Such decisions require public education, consensus building, and innovative thinking so as to limit risks without undo costs to the economy or burdens on the public. The most important ingredient, however, is leadership.

For years officials have expected the intelligence community to provide "actionable intelligence"—data so specific and unambiguous that the U.S. response would be obvious and unarguable. With today's threats, that is hard to provide and we should not expect it.

The best we can hope for is "inferential intelligence," whereby intelligence organizations indicate where the hard evidence leads and describe the possible threats that could result. Then officials must fill in the gray areas and decide how to respond.

September 11 showed what happens when you ignore an enemy abroad who threatens America. Taking action *before* an attack occurs may be the biggest—and most important—challenge of all.

— Bruce Berkowitz

Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.



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